

Old Sleuth Library

HAMUD, THE DETECTIVE.

By OLD SLEUTH.

This Number contains a Complete Story, Unchanged and Unabridged.

No. 31

{ SINGLE
NUMBER. }

GEORGE MUNRO, PUBLISHER,
Nos. 17 to 27 VANDEWATER STREET, NEW YORK.

{ PRICE
10 CENTS. }

Vol. II.

Old Sleuth Library, Issued Monthly.—By Subscription. \$2 per annum.
Copyrighted 1886, by George Munro.—Entered at the Post Office at New York at Second Class Rates.—October 6, 1886.
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"Wasn't you killed on Coney Island beach the other night—shot dead?" Captain Aldern sprang to his feet.

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Hamud, the Detective.

BY OLD SLEUTH.

CHAPTER I.

A HANDSOME young gentleman and a beautiful girl, one bright afternoon a few years ago, were strolling along Fifth Avenue.

They were both youthful, and their dress and bearing proclaimed that they belonged to the higher and cultured class of society.

It was a pleasant October day, and the balmy atmosphere and cloudless sky had enticed out a great throng of promenaders, who, with happy faces, merry voices, and elegant dresses, moved gayly along to see and be seen.

The pair toward whom we have directed our readers' attention were the observed of all observers, and involuntarily one and another of the passers-by would exclaim *sotto voce*:

"What a beautiful couple!"

Beautiful they were. The youth could not have been more than three-and-twenty, and yet every line of his handsome face bespoke a noble and generous manliness, while his tall and graceful form betrayed, despite his faultless attire, a stature distinguished by wonderful strength and agility.

The youth's companion could not have been more than eighteen, and the loveliness of her face was such as to attract the glance of any beholder.

The lovely couple had just passed the Union Club building, when two sets of promenaders met, and a break became necessary to permit the downward and upward bound to proceed.

For a moment the young lady was separated from her companion, and when she joined him again, after having forced her way through the gayly dressed people, the smile had vanished from her face and the color from her cheeks.

The youth at her side noticed the change, and in low, excited tones he exclaimed:

"Heavens! Lucy, are you ill?"

"No, Frank, but I received such a fright!"

"What frightened you, sis?"

"Just at the moment I was separated from you, a young man, with the darkest, strangest face, stepped directly in front of me, and leaning forward, fixed upon me an insolent glance, with the blackest and fiercest pair of eyes I ever saw!"

The youth came to a dead halt, his eyes

flashed with anger, and a red flush mantled his cheeks, as through his quivering lips came the command:

"You walk on. I will overtake you in a moment!"

"Where are you going?" asked the girl, in an anxious tone.

"Never mind; you go on; I will overtake you in a moment," and he made a step backward, but his companion laid her little gloved hand upon his arm and exclaimed:

"Why, you great champion, I suppose you are going back to punish that poor stranger with the black eyes?"

"I am, certainly," was the reply.

"You will do no such thing. Why, you silly man, the poor fellow is not responsible for his dark face and fierce black eyes."

"But you said he looked down insolently in your face."

Again the girl laughed merrily as she answered:

"Well, I suppose that he could claim that I was equally insolent, for there was something in his appearance that riveted my gaze on his face. Come along! Dear me, what a goose I have made of myself! There was nothing in the whole affair to cause me a second thought."

As the young lady spoke in a rapid, earnest manner, she gently tugged on the arm of her companion.

Reluctantly the latter allowed himself to be drawn along, but there remained a frown upon his face.

Half an hour after the scene described, the same young man who had been strolling along Fifth Avenue, was standing in front of a famous New York hotel.

Men were passing in and out, when suddenly the young man uttered a cry of anguish and fell forward upon his face.

Several men rushed to his assistance, and upon turning him over, they found him insensible.

He was carried into the reading-room of the hotel, and a physician sent for.

A cry of horror burst from the lips of the by-standers when the youth's vest was removed, and disclosed his linen stained with fresh blood.

"He has received a knife-thrust," said the doctor, and he ordered the young man to be removed to a room and put to bed.

In the meantime the news of the attempted assassination spread, and a captain of police, accompanied by two detectives, arrived.

An investigation made in the presence of the police officers showed that the wound was a stab evidently made with a long stiletto.

After the patient had been made comparatively comfortable, the captain of the police commenced to make inquiries concerning the tragic occurrence.

"Who stabbed you?" asked the officer.

The wounded youth, who was perfectly conscious, answered:

"I do not know."

"How long had you been standing where you were when you received the cut?"

"About fifteen minutes."

"And in that time you did not notice any one near you whom you could suspect as having a motive to injure you?"

"No, sir."

After a short time the police officers retired, and the youth was left alone with the surgeon.

The detectives did not leave the hotel, however, without making some pertinent inquiries of several parties who had been standing near when the mysterious blow was struck.

None of the latter had seen the thrust made, nor had any of them noticed any one standing near when the youth fell.

Strangely enough, also, not a soul had observed any one fleeing away.

When the officers became satisfied that these last witnesses were strangers to the wounded man, they were compelled to admit that there was something mysterious about the affair, after all.

In the meantime the youth added to the mystery by refusing to reveal his name.

When the surgeon asked him if he wished to send for friends or relatives, he emphatically answered, "No!"

"Is my wound fatal?" he inquired with perfect coolness.

"I can not tell," answered the doctor.

"Will you hand me paper and pen and ink?"

Writing materials were provided, when he wrote with great difficulty—wrote and sealed two notes.

One he handed to the doctor, and said:

"Should I be overtaken with delirium, and all hope of my recovery be past, you will please mail that letter; should I recover you will return it to me."

"I will do as you request," was the answer.

The youth then handed the surgeon a second note, saying:

"Will you be kind enough to see that this one is mailed to-morrow?"

The doctor assented.

The youth was silent for a moment, but at length he said:

"You must hire a nurse for me, and I will give a name, which only you must know is a false one."

"Why do you find it necessary to give a false name?"

"My reasons are my own; I choose to give no explanations," was the impatient answer.

The doctor succeeded in getting the following explanation as his excuse for giving a false name:

"This affair will appear in the papers; by giving a false name my friends will never suspect that I am the victim; and there are many reasons why I do not wish them to, that's all."

"Then you have friends?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you not be missed?"

"Why I will not be missed at present must remain my secret; and now, doctor, I must ask one more favor of you; you must act as my banker for the present."

"If you wish it, I will act as you desire."

"You will find five thousand dollars in a wallet in the inner pocket of my coat; you will find other money in my smaller pocket-book. Please take care of them, and also of my watch and diamonds."

The doctor did as directed, when his patient said:

"Will you be kind enough to step down to the office of the hotel and pay my bill in advance, and please give them to understand that you will settle all claims as they become due?"

The conversation was interrupted just at this moment by the entrance of a young man from the chief detective's office.

He was about thirty, of a strong and muscular frame.

The doctor took advantage of the detective's entrance to leave for awhile, promising to return in due time.

The wounded man and the detective conversed until the doctor's return, when the officer took his leave, promising to call again in the morning.

The doctor brought a nurse, and also announced his intention of remaining with the patient for the night himself.

We will state that the young man and his companion, earlier on the day of the tragedy, after walking up and down the Fifth Avenue, finally separated at the corner of Thirty-fifth Street; he making his way to the hotel, where he was wounded, while the young lady entered an elegant brown stone house on the adjoining square.

As she turned to glance around before passing through the open door-way, her eyes fell upon the figure of a man on the opposite side of the street.

Instantly upon beholding the glance of the stranger fixed upon her, she exclaimed, in a terrified manner:

"Heavens! there's that fellow with the horrid eyes again!"

The stranger was of medium height, possessing a slender, yet graceful person, a dark, tawny complexion, regular features, and eyes of extraordinary blackness and brilliancy.

His strange, penetrating gaze would have frightened a stronger person than a delicately reared girl.

Lucy Palmedo was the only daughter of a millionaire widower.

The latter was an eccentric man who had spent unlimited sums on his child's education.

All the advantages of the richest princess were hers, save the one most coveted gift to a girl of her years; and that was the privilege to reciprocate the love of a noble youth with whom she had been accidentally associated for a few brief weeks.

An eccentric notion of her father's had driven her to clandestine meetings.

On the evening of the same day when the oc-

currences we have described transpired, Lucy was sitting in her own room, her eyes beaming with happiness, and every feature expressive of a merry joyousness, when a letter was handed to her.

As she read the missive, her countenance changed, and the merry, gladsome look upon her lovely face was succeeded by an anxious expression.

The note was the same which the wounded youth had given the doctor to mail.

The latter, acting on his own authority, had dispatched the note by a servant to the proper address at once.

The missive contained but a few brief lines, which ran as follows:

"I must start to-night for Baltimore. I may be gone weeks. If you do not hear from me, you must not be unhappy, as, when I return, I will have a satisfactory excuse for not communicating with you. Do not think that you are the victim of a mere freak, but trust me to furnish in person, at a future day, the explanation which I dare not commit to paper. Oh! dear love, ever praying for the hour when neither of us will have any secrets, and when all our acts shall be open and approved in a love as pure as we bear each other, I remain yours in haste,

"FRANK."

After a moment, as the concluding lines became impressed upon her mind, the smile returned to the young lady's face, and, with folded hands, she sat in a pleasant reverie.

The girl finally aroused from her reverie, and rising from her seat, left the room.

A moment after her departure, a strange being stepped forth from behind some heavy draperies which hung before an alcove, and moved with noiseless tread about the room.

This figure was strangely robed.

The small head was covered by a red fez cap, a loosely fitting tunic was worn next the body, and a mantle of scarlet cloth was drawn over all, fastened with a girdle studded with glittering stones.

The dark face of the strange being was artistically painted so that the features were disguised.

Stepping before the mirror, the odd-looking object surveyed himself a moment, and then, drawing from the folds of his scarlet mantle a glittering poniard, he fixed his fierce eyes upon the polished blade, while the changing gleams in his cobra-like eyes became perfectly fiendish.

Two hours passed, and during that time the figure clad in the Oriental costume moved restlessly to and fro across the room.

At length the sound of merry laughter was heard.

The strange being leaned his head forward and listened.

An instant later he darted behind the draperies from whence he had first emerged, and the door opened, and two young girls came tripping into the room.

One of them was Lucy, and the other was a hardly less beautiful girl of about the same age.

Little did they dream that behind the draperies lay concealed a listener, holding in his nervous grasp the murderous poniard which he had displayed when standing before the mirror a few moments before.

Quickly sped the moments, and soon the two girls were ready to retire.

The gas was lowered until but the smallest jet of flame cast but a dim light around the room.

Beside the heavily carved bedstead both dropped upon their knees, and the closing supplications of another day were uttered, and then the lovely faces were buried in the snowy pillows, as a tender "good-night!" was exchanged.

CHAPTER II.

An hour passed.

The French clock upon the mantel in low, silver tones repeated the hour, when from behind the draperies was protruded the head covered by the fez cap.

An instant later the strange object stepped forth.

No human eye was upon him, as with stealthy step he crossed the room and stood beside the bed.

Well had he detected his victim, as it was toward the side where Lucy slept that he approached.

He raised aloft the glittering knife which gleamed coldly in the dim rays of light.

An instant it was poised in the air, when suddenly the stillness was broken by a strange, startling sound.

The loud, quick, nervous bark of a dog was heard, followed by impatient scratches upon the room door.

With a scream both girls sprung from their pillows, and the room rang with shrill, terrified screams.

As Lucy leaped from the bed, she beheld a dark, shadowy object standing upon the center of the room floor.

In the excitement of the moment, impelled by courage for which she could not afterward account, she sprung toward the strange figure to seize hold of it.

Like a dissolving shadow it fled from her, and to the girl's horror and amazement disappeared with a noiseless plunge through the window.

The next moment voices were heard at the room door.

A voice which Lucy recognized as her father's called for admittance.

She staggered across the room and opened the door.

As she did so a favorite pet terrier leaped into the room, and springing toward the window through which the strange apparition had disappeared, commenced to bark in a most vociferous manner.

The dog was an intelligent little animal, and it went straight toward the window.

Lucy's father was quick to observe this movement, but for the moment paid attention to another matter.

Mr. Palmedo was a cool, brave man, and he at once set about soothing and calming the affrighted girls, before asking what had occurred.

At length he asked:

"What frightened you, my dears?"

"There was a man in the room!" answered his daughter.

"And where did he retreat to, my child?"

"He flew through the window."

The father laughed as he said:

"You have been dreaming, my daughter; that window is forty feet from the ground."

"See!" exclaimed Lucy, "the window is still open, and it was closed when we retired."

"You may think it was closed, but it must have been open."

The father stepped toward the window, when a cry from his daughter caused him to glance toward her.

Upon turning, Mr. Palmedo saw Lucy standing beside the bed with startled eyes, and in her hand she held a poniard, the handle of which glittered with diamonds.

The father sprung toward her.

"Where did you find that weapon?" he asked, for the first time exhibiting tokens of real alarm.

"I found it right here beside the bed," answered the girl, adding: "Papa, this murderous knife is not the product of a dream."

The father directed the two girls to go to an adjoining room.

In the meantime a male servant had arrived, and was standing without the door.

The millionaire sent the man down to his own room to secure a brace of pistols.

When the servant returned the master of the house closed and locked the room door, and also lowered the window.

Placing a cocked pistol in the hands of the servant, and retaining one ready for instant use himself, Mr. Palmedo commenced a thorough search of the room.

Every closet, nook, and corner, and every recess behind every piece of furniture in the room was thoroughly examined, without finding any person.

The servant, who was a brave Irishman, and had been in Mr. Palmedo's service from his boyhood, assisted his master in the search, and after every possible hiding place had been examined, said:

"Begorra, it must have been a shadow, sir, for no mortal man could have got out of this room."

"I can not possibly see how he could, Markey; and yet some one must have been in this room, and he must have got out of it; and as so much of my daughter's story has been confirmed, we must conclude that the intruder certainly did leave by the window."

"Begorra, thin, sir, we must find his body below in the area-way, as there are neither

water-leaders or lintels by which he could have let himself to the ground, unless he had wings like a pigeon."

"You remain in this room, and I will go down and examine in the area way," said Mr. Palmedo.

The master of the house made a thorough examination below-stairs, but not the least sign could he discover.

An ascent to the roof also failed to discover anything.

Markey remained in the room overnight, and upon the following day a detective was sent for.

The latter chanced to be the same young officer who had been detailed to work up the mysterious stabbing of the youth who lay suffering upon his bed in the hotel.

Mr. Palmedo and the detective entered the room where the singular incident had transpired.

The officer made a thorough examination after having listened to the story of the adventure.

At length he said:

"I am of the opinion, sir, that there is no case here for investigation; your daughter must have been dreaming."

Mr. Palmedo had said nothing about the finding of the knife; he now remarked:

"I held the same opinion until this weapon was found lying beside the bedstead."

The moment the detective's eyes fell upon the poniard a complete change came over his countenance.

"There is reality in this," he said, and at once asked to be shown to the scuttle-way leading to the roof of the house.

Once upon the roof the officer proceeded to a point of stone cornice directly overhanging the window from which the assassin was supposed to have jumped.

He made a thorough examination, and to judge by his countenance he found the clues he was in search of, and his theory was confirmed.

When he returned below-stairs he was questioned by Mr. Palmedo.

"I have formed a theory," said the officer, adding: "I can not explain my conclusions at present, but I will demonstrate them in time; and in the meantime, sir, nail down the windows of the room in which your daughter may sleep; never let her remain alone at night, and keep a constant watchfulness over her until such time as we feel it safe to order differently."

"Why, what do you mean, sir?" asked the father, in an agitated manner.

"We have evidence that her life has been at tempted."

"Yes."

"Well, it is best to be on the safe side until the mystery is explained; be the assassin a shadow or any other strange being, we know that by this weapon he is dangerous, and means murder."

"Why should my daughter, an innocent child, have a mysterious foe?"

"That is a question," said the detective, with a significant smile, "which you should be more able to answer than myself."

"But it is not possible that she should have an enemy in the world!"

"But may you not have some secret foe who would strike you through your daughter?"

CHAPTER III.

THE detective identified in his own mind the assassin who had attempted the young man's life, and who had stolen into Lucy Palmedo's room as one and the same.

Addressing Mr. Palmedo, he said:

"I think, sir, that within a few days I can solve this mystery."

"Have you any theory?"

"Well, certain circumstances indicate that your daughter may be the object on which some insane person wishes to wreak an insane vengeance. Again it may prove that she has been mistaken for some one else; the fact that the assassin did not finally carry out his murderous intention, would lead me to believe that he discovered his mistake in time; at any rate you must say nothing about the affair, and I will pledge my life to clear up the mystery."

After some further words of caution the detective left.

Later in the day he entered once more into the presence of the wounded man.

The officer had won the youth's confidence, and had succeeded, under a pledge of secrecy, in learning his true name.

Franklin Midgely was the only son of a wealthy Southern family, who at the time of which we are writing, resided in Baltimore.

Frank and Lucy Palmedo had met earlier in the summer at a well-known fashionable summer resort.

Their meeting and subsequent acquaintance had happened under the most romantic circumstances.

The youth had succeeded in winning the young lady's love, only to learn at the same time that he could not become an open suitor, owing to her father's eccentric ideas.

It was thus matters stood when the startling incidents with which we have opened our narrative transpired.

The detective had daily interviews with Frank Midgely, and succeeded in confirming his theories concerning the double attempt at murder.

The officer had also settled in his own mind concerning the relations existing between Frank and Lucy.

This discovery opened the way for a motive for both assassinations.

Another fact the detective learned, and that was that the two intended victims knew nothing of the person or motive of the shadow-like assassin.

The wound which Frank had received did not prove to be as bad as was first supposed, and under the skillful treatment of the doctor he improved rapidly.

In two weeks from the day he had received the stab he was able to be about.

Another week passed, and Frank was able to leave his bed and room.

The mysterious occurrence which had transpired in the millionaire's mansion had not become public, and for reasons of his own the detective had not seen fit to disclose the facts.

One day Frank was sitting in the reading-room of the hotel. Turning around, he saw the fixed glance of a pair of eyes fastened upon himself.

Thinking it was but a momentary interest which had called down the stranger's fixed glance, Frank turned away.

Upon looking up again he saw that the insolent stranger was still gazing at him.

Frank felt his blood boil with indignation, as he said:

"Are you seeking to insult me?"

The dark-faced fellow nodded affirmatively, but did not deign to speak.

Frank drew a glove from his pocket, and seizing it by the fingers he struck the man who had insulted him a smart blow on the cheek.

The stranger did not resist the blow on the spot, although his face assumed a threatening aspect.

Arising from his seat, he drew a card from his pocket, and with a rising color in his face, tendered the card to Frank.

The latter understood well the significance of this movement, and taking one of his own cards, he gave it to the man in return.

The dark-faced man glanced at the card he had received, and an exclamation in a strange tongue burst from his lips.

Frank stood and watched the fellow, expecting every moment to see the air cut with a treacherously drawn weapon.

Had Frank Midgely calculated that the stranger would assault him, he was doomed to disappointment.

Instead of drawing a weapon, or attempting to prolong the quarrel at that moment, the man merely raised his hat in a polite manner, and turning on his heel, moved away.

As coolly as though nothing more serious than the polite exchange of courtesies had ensued, Frank resumed his seat.

Glancing at the card, he read the name:

"Hamud."

There was nothing else.

Frank had been bred in a section of the country where the code is recognized.

The question now arose who should he select to act for him?

His mind reverted to the detective.

The latter was undoubtedly a man of courage, and despite his having been a policeman, was also a gentleman.

That same afternoon he received two callers.

The first to come was the detective.

Our hero had but just time to relate the strange incidents of the morning, when a second gentleman was shown into his room.

The latter was a foreigner with a peculiar cast of countenance.

He brought a letter from the French consul.

His business was quickly made known.

He came as the bearer of a challenge from one M. Hamud, who had been grossly insulted.

The letter from the French consul was merely a certificate to the effect that Captain Aldema was a gentleman, and entitled to recognition as such.

The interview was brief, and distinguished by those mock courtesies characteristic of such meetings.

As Frank recognized the code he saw no reason to decline fighting, although satisfied that the quarrel had been forced upon him with a purpose.

At the hour named, Walton Sprague met Captain Aldema and listened to a proposition to fight one of the strangest duels which could possibly occur.

In the first place, it was stipulated that the duel should take place at midnight.

The location was to be a point on the Coney Island beach, midway between the railroad terminus and Rockaway.

The contestants were each to be supplied with a pair of pistols containing six charges each, and after the first shot, were to advance and blaze away until every barrel of the four pistols should be emptied, unless one or the other should be killed in the meantime.

The reason stated for the choice of time and place was that the hour was one when there would be no stragglers around, and the constant roll of the surf would deaden the report of the quick discharges.

Another strange condition was, that all preliminaries should be settled between the seconds before the meeting on the ground where the duel was to take place, and that upon the arrival at the place of meeting, not a word was to be allowed between either principals or seconds.

Another strange condition was that no one but the principals and one second each should know aught of the affair, and no doctor or any other party was to be present.

The principals and seconds were to be bound by solemn oaths not to reveal each other's names, either before or after the duel, under any circumstances whatever.

Again, in case of the death of either of the principals, the body of the dead was to be disposed of, in the presence of the winning side, by measures which were as follows:

The challenging party were to have a boat near by, provided with shot-bags and other articles of heavy weight; the dead was to be placed in a sack, and rowed out far from shore, and, with weights attached, sunk in the ocean.

Another repulsive and barbarous condition was, that there was to be no interference on the part of the seconds until one of the combatants was killed, or until the twenty-four shots had been fired.

The serious wounding of either of the principals was not to be a sufficient excuse for the stopping of the duel, unless the more fortunate should wish to desist; but in the event of either wishing to discharge the last fatal shot, under any circumstances he was to be permitted to do so.

All of these conditions were to be ratified by solemn oaths between all the parties.

The detective did not dream for a moment that Frank Midgely would pay the least attention to the conditions, so it was with a smiling face that he related the result of the interview.

To his astonishment, Frank made the remark in the coolest manner:

"The gentlemen have suited me exactly; if I had laid down the conditions myself, I could not have been better pleased."

"But I will not permit you to be a party to any such horrible scheme of butchery."

"Then you can not act as my friend in this matter; I will get some one who is less fastidious."

"You forget that I am an officer," said the detective, "and that I can stop such an arrangement under any circumstances."

Frank Midgely turned and fixed his eyes upon the detective.

His countenance assumed an expression of contempt, and there was a bitter sarcasm in his tones, when he said:

"You have a right to withdraw from this affair if you consider the terms barbarous, but you have no right to use your knowledge as an officer after having obtained it as a friend."

"I only spoke in your own interest," said the detective.

"It is to my interest to fight this duel."

"Why should you fight him at all?"

"Because I wish to kill him."

"Can I ask you to explain why?"

"I must give my confidence to the person

who is to act as my friend. I fear an officer has too much of it already."

"Have you not forgiven me my rash remark?"

"I will forgive you," answered Frank, in a hearty manner.

"Then you must not allude to it again."

"I will not; but answer me, will you withdraw from this affair?"

"I will not withdraw, but with your permission I should like to insist that some of the conditions should be modified."

"I do not wish them modified; they suit me exactly. I will prove that fellow's executioner."

"Did you ever meet him before?" the detective ventured to ask.

"You must not ask me any questions. I can only say that as a man of caution I have no right to avoid any honorable means of removing him from my path."

"You must excuse me for two hours!" suddenly exclaimed the detective, and he left the presence of the youth who appeared so anxious to be butchered.

One hour from the time Walton Sprague had parted from Frank Midgely, his resignation was in the hands of the police department.

CHAPTER IV.

WALTON SPRAGUE was an honorable man.

Promptly at the expiration of the two hours he again presented himself to his new friend.

His first exclamation was—"Now I am prepared to serve you to the best of my ability."

"What countrymen are these fellows with whom I have this quarrel?" asked Frank Midgely.

"Turks or Arabs, I guess."

"Well, we will afford one of them the honor of an American funeral!" said Frank, in a strange, heartless sort of manner.

That same afternoon the detective had a second meeting with the villainous faced captain, and the bloody terms for the fight were ratified.

On the Coney Island beach, far to the eastward of the several railroad termini, is a barren stretch of sand.

A little bar or cape extends out into the sea at low tide, which at the flood is covered by lashing waves.

About half an hour before midnight, and with the light of a full moon, two figures might have been seen floundering through the loose sand toward the wave-deserted bar.

"This is pretty tough walking, Frank," observed one of the men, addressing his companion.

"Yes, especially in my present weak state."

A few moments later the two men who had been walking on a straight line toward the white line of water, reached the beach and found the walking much easier.

As they came to a halt for a moment to rest, Frank glanced up the beach, and, pointing toward the sand-bar, said:

"That must be the place where we are to meet this Monsieur Hamud and his friend?"

"That is the point," answered Walton Sprague, and, as he spoke, he glanced at the full face of his companion.

He saw no look there which betrayed the least fear.

The handsome pale features were rigid in their calmness, and the blue eyes gleamed with a cold, steady glance.

"I see nothing of them," remarked the detective, as they approached the selected place.

"Oh, that murderous villain will appear like a shadow at the proper moment!" answered Frank.

This remark caused the detective to give a start as an idea flashed across his mind, and he exclaimed:

"I think you have betrayed your motive for being so anxious to meet this man and kill him!"

"Well, what do you suspect?" asked Frank, in a careless tone.

"You believe him to be the silent, treacherous assassin who attempted your life by giving you that stab a few weeks ago?"

"I never met Hamud until the time we had our singular quarrel."

During this conversation the two men arrived at the place where, as near as they could determine, they were to meet the other two men.

Presently Frank Midgely drew out his watch, and striking a match, saw that it was just three minutes of twelve o'clock.

He turned to his companion and remarked:

"It is time for them to be here."

Turning about at the same moment, a shadow

lengthened beside him, and upon turning fully around, he saw his antagonist and his companion.

Walton Sprague saw the two men at the same moment, and involuntarily exclaimed:

"By George! you told the truth! they did appear like two shadows!"

Forgetting for an instant the terms of the duel, the detective advanced to speak to M. Aldema, but the latter waved him back.

Walton Sprague recollected himself and came to a halt.

M. Aldema had reserved the right, among other advantages, to give the signal to fire.

Little did the detective dream that in conceding this right he was favoring two assassins in their cunning design to murder an unsuspecting man, under a show of honorable combat.

The mysterious Hamud did not approach anywhere near where Frank and Walton stood, nor did he once face toward them.

M. Aldema proceeded to pace off the stipulated distance, and planted a mark at each point.

Having concluded his task of measuring the distance, he went to his principal, and led him to one of the indicated points.

Frank did not wait to be led to his position, but walked straight to the opposite point, and stood erect and calm.

Walton Sprague stepped beside Frank, and whispered in a low voice:

"Watch well the signal; an idea of treachery has just flashed across my mind!"

"I have been prepared for treachery all along," was the reply.

The signal agreed upon was the calling of the words, one, two, three; the combatants to fire at the word three.

After a few moments Aldema said:

"Are you ready, gentlemen?"

"Are you all ready, Frank?" asked the detective, addressing his principal.

"I am!" was the calm reply.

"We are ready, gentlemen!" called Walton Sprague, and he stepped to one side to allow the bloody battle to proceed.

An instant's silence followed, then came with deliberate distinctness the word *one!* followed after an interval as agreed by the signal *two!*

Walton Sprague had his eyes fixed on M. Hamud and his second.

Despite the darkness, the detective noticed a signal passing between the two men which was immediately followed by the final word *three!* and the report of a pistol.

Walton Sprague's hand was quickly clapped upon the butt of his pistol.

He had keen eyes and keener ears, and had detected the subtle fraud when it was too late to interfere.

Hamud's pistol was discharged just one-third of a second ahead of the utterance of the final signal; and in that brief space of time a foul murder might have been committed.

A thrilling scene followed. The intended treachery had failed its purpose.

Instead of falling a victim to the intended plot, Frank Midgely was uninjured; and almost at the same moment his own pistol flashed with Hamud's.

The battle commenced in real earnest. Neither of the combatants were injured by the first shot, and according to the agreement they instantly advanced toward each other firing as they advanced.

Walton Sprague paid no attention to the two principals. He knew now that treachery and murder was intended, and he kept his eye fastened upon Captain Aldema.

In a moment his caution was justified. He saw that individual draw a pistol.

In the same instant, despite the darkness, the detective saw the traitor raise and level it.

The aim was at Frank Midgely.

Walton Sprague was just the man for such an emergency, and the moment had now come for him to act.

The two principals were blazing away at each other rapidly, when a third flash illuminated the surrounding darkness, and a third report broke the stillness.

The last flash had belched from Walton Sprague's pistol, and his aim had been at Captain Aldema.

His suspicions were instantly confirmed, as almost simultaneously with the report of the detective's weapon came a fourth from Captain Aldema.

The whole scene which we have described, transpired in less than a minute.

Suddenly, a fresh sign of treachery was disclosed.

A fifth person appeared upon the field.

The latter was armed, and commenced blazing away.

Just as he appeared upon the scene, Hamud fell upon his face in the wet sand, without uttering a cry or groan.

Still the fight continued, and the combatants, four of whom still remained, advanced closer and closer to each other.

Suddenly Captain Aldema went down.

He, too, failed to utter a groan or a cry.

The third man seeing both of his companions down, took to his heels and disappeared, and the fearful fight so strangely begun and ended was over.

Walton Sprague rushed up to Frank Midgely and asked:

"Are you hit?"

"No!" was the firm reply. "Are you?"

"No."

"Thank Heaven!" ejaculated Frank, "we have been preserved through a foul conspiracy and intended murder!"

"Treachery, treachery, from first to last!" said the detective.

Frank and the detective advanced to where Hamud lay.

The latter dropped upon his knee and placed his hand over the man's heart.

"You have settled him, Frank," he said. "he is as dead as a door-nail!"

They advanced to the body of the captain.

An instant's examination proved that he was dead also.

"We have anticipated the hangman!" said the detective. "Those men intended murder from the first!"

"It is evident," said Frank, in a musing tone, "that there has been a concerted plan to murder me."

"And can you not form the least suspicion why these strange men wished to take your life?"

"I can not."

"Well, then, it must be that you are implicated through the Palmedo family."

Frank Midgely uttered an exclamation of astonishment, and asked:

"What do you know about the Palmedo family?"

"All."

"How all?"

"I will tell you at some other time; the question is, what are we to do with these two bodies?"

"Were they not to have a boat somewhere handy around here to use to *bury us?*"

"By George, you are right! We must look for that boat."

There was a small inlet running in from the ocean on the other side of the cave where the fearful combat had taken place.

Toward this inlet the two men proceeded, satisfied that if there was a boat they would find it there.

The men proceeded a few steps and walked along the sandy shore of the inlet.

Suddenly Frank espied a dark object floating on the water, and exclaimed:

"What is that?"

CHAPTER V.

"THAT is a boat, if the court knows itself," answered the detective.

As the officer spoke, he observed a dark form crawling away through the darkness, and with the remark: "What is that?" he darted forward.

The dark object moving over the sands proved to be the figure of a man, who, perceiving that he was being pursued, took to his heels.

The detective did not follow him far.

Returning to Frank, he found the latter hauling in the anchor line of a skiff.

Dragging the skiff up on the shore, the detective commenced to examine its contents.

The latter were suggestive enough, and as the officer held up to view two shotted sacks, he remarked:

"These were to have been our winding-sheets; but I think now they will serve as shrouds for the two assassins who would have murdered us."

"We have not much time to spare," said Frank, "or daylight will find us with these dead men on our hands."

"You stand here and watch the boat, while I go and bring one of the bodies."

Walton Sprague was a strong, muscular man, and taking the form of Hamud, which was just stiffening in death, he bore it to the boat. It

was a ghastly business, but circumstances had forced it upon him.

After depositing the body of Hamud, the detective returned and secured the other body.

The detective was very matter-of-fact about all of his movements. He proceeded at once to draw the two shotted sacks over the bodies.

When the two bodies were securely tied in the sacks, they were placed in the boat, and Walton Sprague took the oars with the remark:

"This terrible business will soon be completed now."

The boat proved to be a stanch little craft, and the detective was a strong rower. Owing to the fact that they shot out from the inlet, they did not encounter much more than a heavy swell, and fortunately were not called upon to encounter any formidable breakers.

Walton Sprague kept straight ahead until he was fully a mile from shore.

"Shall we not unload now?" asked Frank, in a hoarse voice.

"No; we will return to the city in this boat, and will not cast the sacks into the sea until we get around the point."

Few more words were passed.

Walton Sprague strained steadily at his oars, and Frank sat wet and grim in the stern, with his eyes fixed upon the two sacks, with their ghastly contents.

Our hero's mind was busy trying to solve the strange mystery of the motive of these men who had sought his life.

Addressing Walton Sprague, Frank said:

"You were to tell me how you came to know of my acquaintance with Lucy Palmedo?"

The detective related the exciting story of Lucy's adventure with the strange assassin, who had disappeared through the window like a shadow.

Frank was thunder-struck.

The idea came across his mind that possibly the double murder was prompted by some enmity toward the Palmedo family, and that he was an object of hate only through his connection with Lucy.

Mr. Palmedo was not an American, and Lucy had admitted that, although she knew that her mother was an American lady, she really did not know what countryman her father was, as, for some strange reason, he would never tell, not even his own child.

The two men were discussing the matter when Frank suddenly exclaimed:

"Heavens! Walton, there's a schooner bearing down upon us!"

The detective looked in the direction indicated, and there, sure enough, he saw the outlines of a vessel looming through the gloom.

"We have not been hailed; may be they have not seen us!" he exclaimed, and dropping his oars he threw the two sacks, one after the other, into the water.

They had been well shotted, and they quickly sunk beneath the waves.

An instant later a hail came from the schooner.

The lookout had discovered the boat, and had seen the sacks tossed overboard.

Walton Sprague made no reply to the hail.

He feared that he had been seen, and seizing his oars, he headed the skiff toward the shore and pulled vigorously.

The schooner was under full sail, and before she could have been brought to in the thick darkness, the boat could steal out of sight.

Within two hundred yards the large vessel flew past.

"By George!" exclaimed the detective, "that was a narrow chance! that was bad freight to have been caught with in our possession."

Steadily he pulled, and in the excitement of the moment failed to change his course.

He had been much nearer to the shore than he had supposed, and in a moment the little boat was lifted high on a foam-crested breaker.

"Heavens! We are among the breakers!"

In the surprise of the moment the oarsman rested upon his oars just for a second, when a second breaker caught the skiff and whirled her around broadside.

An instant later the boat filled and sunk, and the two men were struggling in the water.

Quicker than thought they drifted from each other's view.

Fortunately both were excellent swimmers.

Walton Sprague would have tried to save Frank's life at the risk of his own, but at that moment he had no choice.

It would have been madness for him to have swum around in the darkness.

Once, when lifted high on the crest of a wave, he called out "Frank!"

"Ay! ay!" came the response from a distance.

The detective knew that if his companion was above water at that moment, that he must be a swimmer, and he set about making for the beach.

A few moments later the detective's feet struck bottom, and, all dripping, he waded to the beach.

CHAPTER VI.

His first thought, the moment he was safe beyond the lashing waters, was of his friend.

He ran his eye up and down the beach.

He could see no one, and no response came to his call.

Suddenly his straining eyes rested upon an object rising upon the crest of a wave.

In the dim light he was enabled to discern that it was a human form.

It was almost certain death to venture once more amidst the breakers, yet the detective did not hesitate a moment, but dashed amidst the boiling waters.

Manfully he breasted the lashing waves, when suddenly the floating body was dashed against him with great force.

The brave man seized the form of his friend, and with the strength and endurance of a Newfoundland dog, headed once more for the beach.

Fortune favored him, and he speedily emerged from the waters a second time, bearing the body with him.

Thrusting his hand in his dripping pockets, he drew forth a brandy flask, and forcing Frank Midgely's lips open, poured some of the liquor down his throat.

There was a movement. Walton Sprague continued his exertions, and his patient soon opened his eyes and sighed.

A short time elapsed, and Frank was fully restored.

"I owe my life to you, brave man," he said.

"Bah! don't mention such things just now, my boy—but I tell you what we must do; dry our clothes and get away from here."

The officer selected a spot in a hollow between rising sand-banks.

He found plenty of dry driftwood, and having matches which had been preserved in a water-tight metal match-box, he soon succeeded in having a crackling, blazing fire.

"We will have crumpled clothes, but dry ones, to go home in," said he in a lively tone.

The officer was an old hand at making the best of circumstances, and he set about treading the beach for soft-shell clams.

He was amply rewarded; and having secured a mess he roasted them in the embers, and the two men indulged in a hearty and nourishing breakfast while waiting for their clothes to dry.

Daylight at length began to break.

The rain had ceased to fall an hour before, and the prospect of a fine day was encouraging.

At length in muffled but dry clothes, and with full stomachs, the two men started for home.

They speedily discovered that they had landed some five miles from the point where the terrible double duel had taken place.

The officer knew the place well, and the several routes leading from it.

He chose the road leading to Fort Hamilton.

They reached Fort Hamilton in time to take the first car for the city.

Few of those hastening to the city to their daily labors, dreamed through what adventures their two fellow-passengers had passed.

When they reached the city, they separated, promising to meet again later in the day.

Frank Midgely went straight to his hotel, and to his bed.

Early in the afternoon he arose and descended to the reading-room to await the coming of his friend.

He had just seated himself when his glance fell upon a slender form, which appeared familiar.

Frank's face was pale, and his heart beat wildly as he moved around to look at the stranger's face.

One glance was sufficient.

He was gazing upon the face and form of the mysterious Hamud.

The latter looked at our hero in a cold, stony manner, as though he had never seen him before.

Frank did not speak, but went to his own apartment.

"Heavens!" was his ejaculation, "am I bat-

ting with a shadow? Some unreal being from the lower depths?"

While still thinking upon the subject, he was aroused by the entrance of his friend, the detective.

The latter at once observed the agonized look upon Frank's face, and exclaimed in an anxious tone:

"You are sick?"

"I have seen a ghost!"

Walton Sprague laughed and said:

"Whose ghost have you seen—Monsieur Hamud's?"

"Yes."

"In this room, I suppose?" laughed the detective.

"No, not in this room, but in the building, down in the reading-room."

"No, no, Frank; the day has not come for the sea to give up its dead; you have been dreaming!"

"Come down-stairs with me, and I will show you whether I have been dreaming or not."

Walton Sprague hesitated a moment, but thinking that it might be best to humor Frank, and knowing that the ghost would not be found, he followed his friend down-stairs.

CHAPTER VII.

THE two men entered the reading-room.

Frank led the way directly to the chair where the mysterious Hamud had been sitting.

The chair was vacant.

"He has gone!" he said.

"Yes," whispered Walton Sprague; "I know he would be gone, because he was not sitting there."

Frank did not see fit to argue the question further, and the subject was changed by a strange remark which fell from the detective's lips.

The latter said:

"I wish this matter was wholly settled, and I would make an effort to be reinstated to my old position."

"Which old position?"

"My position on the police force."

"Are you not on the force?"

"No."

"Why, how is that?"

"I resigned."

"When?"

"Day before yesterday."

An idea flashed over our hero's mind, and he asked:

"How did you come to resign?"

"As a matter of honor."

"Because as an officer you could not act as my friend in last night's adventure?" exclaimed Frank.

"Yes."

"And you made this sacrifice for me?"

Walton Sprague colored as he said:

"Do not say that. I acted as I did of my own free choice."

"I am rich enough to hire you to enter my service," said Frank; "and I can afford to pay you just double the salary you received from the city."

"My dear sir, your enemy lies at the bottom of the sea; the mystery which you would unravel is hidden in that shotted sack. There is nothing left for me to do in your behalf. I speak from experience."

"My shadow-like enemy still walks abroad! He is still upon my track! I saw him this morning! Whatever the mystery was, it is greater now. I owe my life to you; you are a brave man, and have proved that you are to be trusted; you must enter my service, and as far as money is concerned I can make you rich, and still be a millionaire; in fact, I have a service for you to perform for me at once."

"We will talk about my entering your service at another time; for the present let me serve you as a friend, and you may command me just as freely as though I were in your pay."

"You shall be munificently rewarded whether you wish it or not; and now then to present business. You have the *entrée* to Mr. Palmedo's house as a detective?"

"I have."

"Frankly, I love Lucy Palmedo, and I am determined to marry her; she thinks that I am out of town, and has thought so ever since the day I was wounded."

"You wish me to communicate with her for you?"

"I do."

"I am at your service."

"I must visit her house in disguise; I dare not ask her to meet me, when I know that that shadow assassin is lurking around like an invisible monster of evil."

"You wish me to prepare her for your visit?"

"Yes."

The day following the conversation above described, a coupé stopped in front of the palatial residence of the millionaire, Mr. Palmedo.

A fashionably dressed lady alighted, ascended the stoop, and when the servant appeared in answer to her summons, entered, sending a card to Miss Lucy.

The visitor, who was veiled, was shown into a parlor, and a few moments later Lucy Palmedo entered.

The young lady rushed forward, her lovely face covered with blushes, and exclaimed, as she extended her hand cordially to the lady visitor:

"Frank! oh, I am so glad to see you! But you must never adopt this course to gain my presence."

"Lucy, do you love me?"

"Oh, Frank, I have once confessed that I loved you."

"Is yours a mere passing fancy, dear girl, or do you really, truly love me, so that once having loved me you will love me always?"

"Why do you seek an answer to your question in such a strange, eager manner?"

"I will tell you why, darling. This game of secrecy must be abandoned. I must seek you from your father openly; my life is now centered in your life; if we love these are reasons why we should marry—or, at least, why I should be permitted to woo you openly; you have always kept me from speaking to your father; you bound me by a sacred promise never to do so without your consent; you must release me from that promise now."

"Oh, Frank, why have you come to demand this?" exclaimed Lucy, in a trembling tone.

"We are doing wrong; there is but one way, and that is the straightforward one."

"But my father will be so angry."

"There is no reason why he should. I am his equal socially. I am not a fortune-seeker, as I am satisfied that I am a richer man than your rich parent. He must consent to our wedding!"

We will not dwell upon the conversation which followed.

Frank waxed eloquent, and his pleadings finally prevailed, and he won Lucy's consent for him to speak to her father.

Frank had finally concluded his business, and was about to take his departure, when Lucy caused him to give a start upon exclaiming:

"Oh! Frank, I had such a fright yesterday!"

"What happened?" he asked, eagerly.

"You know that man with the strange eyes whom we met the last time you and I were walking together?"

"Yes, I remember."

"Well, I saw him again to-day. And as true as I am alive, I believe that fellow was following me."

Frank's face assumed a deathly hue as he said:

"Oh! Lucy, you must not go out alone any more; and this is another reason why I must see your father at once."

"I have something to tell you, Frank."

"What is it, darling?"

Lucy proceeded to tell of the adventure with the strange assassin, who had gained access to her room.

Frank, as our readers know, had heard the story, but he did not let his betrothed know that he had.

When she had concluded her recital he said in an indifferent manner:

"Oh! it was a common burglar who escaped by some trick! But tell me, darling, what kind of a looking man is this fellow with the peculiar eyes?"

"He looks like an Arab," answered Lucy, and she proceeded and did just what Frank thought she would do—gave an accurate description of Hamud.

Frank returned directly to his hotel; entering by the private entrance, he sought his own room, anxious to change his false attire.

He found Walton Sprague awaiting him.

Our hero's face expressed great excitement, and the detective exclaimed:

"Ha! my friend, something extraordinary has happened again. Have you seen the ghost once more?"

"Some one else has seen the ghost!"

"Who?"

"Lucy Palmedo."

"When?"

"This very morning."

"Impossible!"

"Go and see her, hear the story from her own lips, but do not let her know that you have heard anything from me; just go and make inquiries in your capacity as detective in the matter."

"I will go at once!" exclaimed the detective, and he left the room.

In about two hours Walton Sprague returned. It was the detective's turn to exhibit considerable excitement.

"Well?" asked Frank.

"Frank, this is the strangest thing I ever heard of in all my life."

"You are now satisfied that I need your services as a detective?"

"I will stick to you through thick and thin to the death!" exclaimed the manly detective, extending his hand to our hero.

"Have you formed a theory as to the solution of this wonderful mystery?"

"I have."

"What is it?"

"I can not tell you now; but one thing remember, you must be on your guard every moment of your life. You are surrounded by assassins!"

"I believe I am!"

"Great heavens! what can their motive be, as it is evident that they wish to destroy two lives."

"And those lives are—"

"Yours and Lucy Palmedo's!" answered the detective.

"Did you warn her not to go out?"

"I warned her on her life, and you—well, I must not lose sight of you; you must let me come here and room with you, there may be a dozen of those dark-faced murderers lurking around the very halls of this house."

"If I meet that Hamud again what shall I do?"

"Watch him, and avoid him!"

"Shall I not speak to him?"

"Not on your life!"

"It might help to solve the mystery. I could ask him some very pertinent questions."

"You must not speak to him on any account whatever. If there is any speaking to be done let me do it."

The next day Frank Midgely set out to call upon Mr. Palmedo.

He was shown into that august man's presence.

The rich banker recognized him at once and extended a cordial greeting.

"I have come to see you on very important business," said Frank, directly advancing toward the subject which had led him to seek the interview.

"Indeed!" said the banker, adding: "I will be glad to be of any service to you."

"I have come to ask your daughter's hand in marriage," said Frank, abruptly.

If our hero had drawn a pistol and suddenly presented it at the banker's head, the latter could not have shown more astonishment, nor exhibited, as it seemed, greater signs of terror.

For a full moment not a word was spoken.

At length Lucy's father managed to ejaculate:

"Young man, how dare you come to me with any such audacious proposal?"

"Who should I go to, sir?"

CHAPTER VIII.

If Frank's answer was a cool one, it at least had the merit of embodying considerable direct common sense, and Mr. Palmedo was forced to reply:

"Has my daughter intimated to you that she wishes to become your wife?"

"Yes, sir."

"I suppose you are like most young men, respectable but poor; ambitious and hopeful, and above all, dead in love."

"I am the latter, sir, surely."

"I don't doubt it," said Mr. Palmedo, in a sarcastic tone, adding: "It is not strange that you should be dead in love with my daughter when you know that she is to inherit a large fortune."

"About how large a fortune will she inherit, sir?" asked Frank, with the utmost coolness.

"My daughter will inherit at least a million and a half," said the banker, smacking his lips after the fashion of millionaires.

Frank did not start, nor did his eyes dilate, but he answered in an indifferent manner:

"But my wife's share of my fortune would be about two millions and a half, at least."

Upon hearing this extraordinary statement, Mr. Palmedo's eyes dilated, and he actually leaped from his chair in astonishment.

The next moment, however, the announcement struck him as too incredible for belief, and he said:

"You can not marry my daughter, my young friend, and I will excuse your further presence."

A flush of anger mantled our hero's cheek.

"You had better consider my proposition before you dismiss me thus summarily."

"I trust that none but a gentleman would ever presume to seek my daughter's hand in marriage," said the banker, in a freezing tone.

"I am a gentleman!"

"Then, if you are, you will not force your presence upon me. I have given you an answer, and I have plainly intimated that your presence was an annoyance."

"Under ordinary circumstances I would not be told a second time, but there are important matters I wish to speak to you about, matters which concern you and your daughter, outside of my interest in the latter. Her life is in danger."

"If you do not leave my office, sir, I shall summon my porter to eject you!"

This last threat was more than our hero could stand, and, seizing his hat from the table where he had placed it, he said:

"I hope you may never regret your obstinate conduct!" and took his departure.

Mr. Palmedo was a very violent man, and subject to sudden and determined dislikes.

That night when he returned home he had a long talk with his daughter.

The latter frankly told him concerning all that had passed between her and Frank.

Mr. Palmedo was not appeased by this open confession.

He had conceived a violent prejudice, and he positively forbade his daughter ever meeting her lover again.

That night when Lucy sought her couch it was with a heavy heart.

The father remained seated in his library after the interview far into the night.

He was just about to retire to his own room when he was horror-stricken by hearing piercing screams.

* * * * *

When Lucy Palmedo had sought her room it was with a firm determination to obey her father's command.

She did not despair of ever seeing Frank again, but she resolved not to do so until her strange parent had relented.

She had been in bed long enough to fall asleep when she was suddenly awoken by a strange feeling, for which she could never after satisfactorily account.

Upon opening her eyes a strange and fearful sight met her gaze.

The gas had been turned half on, and by its light she saw a terrible-looking being standing over her.

The object held in his hand a poniard, and the gleaming weapon was raised in the air, the point aimed directly over her fair bosom.

At that moment a scratching noise was heard at the room door.

Although Lucy could not speak, her senses were keenly alive.

She knew that a friend was near, and every moment expected to hear an alarm given which would bring her father to her rescue.

She was not disappointed.

A shrill bark broke the stillness.

The sound broke the spell which had held Lucy speechless, and the barks of the dog were instantly drowned by her own piercing shrieks.

The strange figure sprung from beside the bed.

He leaped toward the middle of the floor and extinguished the gas.

Lucy's courage had returned.

Despite the knowledge that the assassin held the poniard, she made an effort to seize him.

The mysterious being glided from her grasp, and a second time, like a shadow, disappeared through the open window.

At the same moment Mr. Palmedo appeared at the room door.

A second time he found the door locked on the inside.

Lucy opened it and let him in the room.

"My child, my child! what is the matter?" asked the father.

The daughter related what had occurred, while her father relit the gas.

As Mr. Palmedo listened to the story his appearance of terror vanished, and a cold, sardonic smile rested upon his stern face.

A suspicion flashed across his mind.

He did not attempt to look for the assassin, and when the servants came flocking to the room he ordered them to return to bed, stating that nothing had occurred, and that his daughter had only been frightened by his own entrance into her room.

Lucy was astonished at her father's singular indifference.

In the meantime but one thought was present in her father's mind.

He remembered the words of Frank Midgely:

"Your daughter's life is in danger!"

Mr. Palmedo imagined that he saw through the whole trick.

"The lovers were playing a trick.

"Poor child," he said, "return to bed; you have been dreaming again!"

Lucy had heard something drop upon the floor when she sought to seize the assassin, and she commenced to look around to see what it was.

She found a sandal such as is worn by Orientals.

"This is not the product of a dream, papa!" she said, triumphantly.

The father glanced at the singular-looking pedal adornment and said coolly:

"Oh! yes it is, my child!"

"Why, papa?"

"Come, go to bed, darling, and dream again; next time you may be able to show me a whole armory of weapons and other curious articles!"

"Papa!" was all that Lucy could say.

There was something in his daughter's tones so honest that the idea crossed her father's mind that it might be possible that she was not a party to the deception which was being practiced, and he asked:

"My child, do you honestly assure me that you have told me an unvarnished tale?"

"Papa, could you suspect your child of stooping to deception?"

"And you are sure you were not dreaming?"

"Is this the product of a dream?" again asked Lucy, holding forth the sandal.

"You say you had a fair view of the assassin's face?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did it strike you that there was anything familiar in that face?"

"Yes, sir!" answered Lucy, promptly.

"You had seen the assassin's features before?"

"I think I had, sir!"

"How much did they resemble your friend's?"

"What friend?"

"Frank Midgely."

Again Lucy could only exclaim:

"Oh! papa!"

"My child! I do not think that you are a party to a certain deception, but I fear an effort is being made to deceive both of us."

"By whom, papa?"

"It is not necessary for me to tell; but did Frank Midgely ever warn you that your life was in danger?"

"No, sir."

"Did he ever warn you at all?"

"Yes, sir."

"Against what?"

"Against this very assassin whom I have seen to-night."

Mr. Palmedo laughed outright.

His daughter's honest confession had solved, as he thought, all doubts.

"My child," he said, "you are the victim of a trick!"

"Possibly, papa; but one thing is certain: Frank Midgely is not a party to any trick, as your questions would suggest."

"Why should he warn you, then, against the assassin? How should he know that a shadow-like murderer was liable to enter your room?"

"Because I told him about the man following me with the strange eyes, and he warned me against that man!"

Mr. Palmedo asked concerning the man with the strange eyes, and his daughter told him.

Her father was puzzled.

The whole affair appeared to be very mysterious.

Still, he could not banish from his mind the

suspicion that Frank was at the bottom of the whole affair, and consequently he was not greatly alarmed.

He commanded his daughter not to communicate to living soul what had occurred.

He even went so far as to caution her not to even write to any one concerning the matter, and not to write to or receive a letter from Frank Midgely under any circumstances whatever.

Two nights following the scenes above described Walton Sprague entered Frank Midgely's room at the hotel, bleeding from a serious wound in his neck.

CHAPTER IX.

UPON the second night following the adventure with the assassin in Lucy's bedroom, Walton Sprague was sauntering along Broadway, when a form passed through a bright ray of light which came flashing through a store-window.

One glance was sufficient; the detective had at last set eyes on the shadow assassin.

Silently he glided upon the man's tracks.

The latter kept upon his way, seemingly unconscious of being followed.

The detective "piped" his game down below Canal Street, and through the cross streets which lead down to the thoroughfare that runs in the rear of the Tombs.

Walton Sprague was so intent in running down his own game that he never gave time to learn that he himself was being dogged just as stealthily as he was pursuing another.

Suddenly a startling incident occurred.

The slender-formed man whom the detective had been piping suddenly started on a run and dodged around the corner out of sight before the officer fairly realized what had occurred.

The truth flashed over the officer's mind.

The fellow had known all along that he was being followed.

The detective determined not to be run out of his game in such a summary manner, and was just on the point of starting on a run after his man, when the report of a pistol broke the stillness and Walton Sprague fell headlong, face downward, on the pavement.

In a moment the officer was on his feet, and had drawn and cocked his own pistol.

He looked around in every direction, but could see no sign of a living soul.

The officer felt the warm blood running down his back and knew that he had been wounded.

He had been in scrimmages before, and, laying his finger in the wound, discovered that it was across his neck, and was merely a flesh cut.

He was bleeding pretty freely and knew at once that his "piping" jig was up for the time being.

Angry and mortified, he returned toward the hotel.

Upon reaching the hotel and entering the room where Frank was, the latter exclaimed:

"Great heavens! what has happened? Have you been to the beach again?"

The detective smiled grimly and answered:

"No; but I have been skinned with a bullet by one of your shadow assassins!"

The detective had met with a very narrow escape.

The next day he was on the street again.

He was better prepared now to deal with his shadow-like foes, from the fact that he knew that they were acquainted with his figure, and also because he was aware that he would have a number to deal with.

He proceeded straight to the place where he had been wounded, convinced that his game would also return to the scene of the previous night's adventure.

He soon saw two men coming down the street. One of them he recognized with a start of astonishment.

It was Captain Aldema.

The other man the detective did not remember having seen before, but he concluded that he must be one of the gang, as he possessed the same Oriental complexion and features as the others.

As they walked over the place where Walton Sprague had fallen, a signal passed between them.

Captain Aldema was evidently explaining the event which had occurred, and was showing the spot just where the officer fell.

As the detective watched the two men from his hiding-place, he muttered:

"All right, my dark-visaged friend; it was

your shot last night; mine will come some of these days, and I will be a trifle more careful in my aim!"

The two men did not stop, but passed along the street.

The detective started in pursuit.

Relying upon his disguise, he did not dream that he was running any risk.

The men passed along, and entered a low place kept by a Chinaman.

The detective knew the place well, and boldly entered a short time after them.

He was well acquainted with the ways of the house, and passing to an inner room found a motley assemblage of Asiatics engaged in several low amusements.

Some were gambling after the fashion of their nation, while others were lounging around in pure Asiatic attitudes, smoking.

The detective was supplied with pipe and tobacco, and stretching himself upon a greasy divan, commenced smoking.

Captain Aldema and his dark-faced companion were also indulging in a smoke, and had ordered a bottle containing a special liquid, which they appeared to enjoy very much.

The men remained an hour in this strange resort, and then left, and walking a short distance up the street, entered another house kept by an Italian.

During the time they had been in the Chinaman's shop they had been talking earnestly, and at times in loud tones, but the detective did not understand a word that passed between them, as the language in which they conversed was one which he had never heard before.

The detective knew that Aldema spoke broken English, and when he found him in the Italian's place, he took an opportunity to address him.

"You do not appear to remember ever seeing me before, captain?" he said.

The captain still did not deign to reply.

"I am well acquainted with you," said the detective. "I once did you a good service."

This last remark caused the captain to exclaim:

"You did me a service?"

"Yes, sir."

"What service did you do me?"

"I threw you overboard once!"

A strange look came over the captain's face, and shrugging his shoulders, he said in broken English, and with a disdainful laugh:

"I guess you are drunk!"

"It is not strange that you should forget the circumstances," said the detective, coolly.

"Why should I forget it?"

"Because you were dead when I threw you overboard."

The captain glared.

The pretended 'longshoreman laughed in a careless manner.

At length the captain said:

"You are a lunatic! If I was dead when you threw me overboard, how is it that I am alive now?"

"That is just what I want to ask you," said the detective, with strange coolness.

"Well, I can not tell you, only that I have never been dead, and that I was never thrown in the water; and I guess that it is better that you go away, or I may think you want to insult me."

"Before I go, let me ask you one question: Wasn't you killed on the Coney Island beach the other night—shot dead?"

Captain Aldema sprang to his feet and drew his knife.

In a moment, however, the detective had him and his companion covered with the muzzles of two pistols.

"I can not understand this outrage," said Aldema.

"I want to explain it to you," said the detective.

"Well, I am listening."

"You are satisfied that I know you," said the officer.

"I do not admit it."

"I know you and every one of your gang, and I know your purpose; and if you are not out of New York, every soul of you, in twenty-four hours, I will have every mother's son of you in the Tombs."

"Ah! I see you are a detective," said the captain.

"I am."

"I will show you something," said the captain, in a cool manner.

CHAPTER X.

"ALL right!" laughed the detective, still keeping his pistols cocked.

"You have made a mistake, and I will prove it," said the captain.

"Go ahead, and prove it!"

"I only arrived in New York yesterday," and as the captain spoke, he laid some ship's papers before the detective.

The detective glanced at the papers, but said nothing.

The captain inquired:

"Are you satisfied?"

Walton Sprague had been revolving certain things in his mind, and had quickly arrived at a conclusion, and he replied:

"I am satisfied; but you certainly bear a remarkable resemblance to a man well known to the New York police."

"Who is this man whose resemblance to me has caused me this annoyance?"

"He is the party whom I took you to be—Captain Aldema."

"And how has he chanced to bring himself under the surveillance of the police?"

"He is a member of a gang of murderers! The whole gang is under surveillance, and if any harm ever comes to a young gentleman named Frank Midgely, or a young lady named Palmedo, every member of that gang will swing, certain, as they are all known, and can not make a move which is not 'piped.'"

While the detective was speaking, he kept his eyes fixed upon Aldema's face.

Sprague was not deceived by the ship papers—he only pretended to be, for a purpose.

The officer had accomplished his purpose, and with many apologies, he left Aldema's presence.

His object in speaking to the man was to bring about just the declaration which he had succeeded in making.

He had wanted to warn the assassins that they were known and watched, and that the police were aware of their designs on the life of our hero.

A week passed.

During the interval neither Frank nor Lucy had seen anything of the mysterious Hamud.

The detective hoped that his warning had proved effective, still he did not feel secure.

Frank had once more sought an interview with Mr. Palmedo.

The latter had positively declined to see him.

He then tried to see Lucy.

In the latter quarter he failed also.

The girl had promised her father that she would not meet Frank in a clandestine manner again, and she was determined to keep her promise.

Thus several days passed.

Our hero had fallen back upon his pride, and had determined, for the time being, not to attempt to communicate with either father or daughter.

Walton Sprague had been out of town for a few days, attending to some police business.

Frank one night had just retired in quite a gloomy state of mind, when there came a rap at his room door.

Springing from the bed, and slipping on his trousers and dressing-gown, he opened the door.

Two men crowded past him into the room.

The young man asked, in an indignant tone:

"Who are you, and what do you want in my room at this hour?"

"Your name is Franklin Midgely, I believe?" said one of the men.

"That is my name."

"Well, get on your clothes as soon as you can."

"Put on my clothes?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir, just as quick as you can, as we have not much time to spare."

"But why shall I put on my clothes?"

"To go with us."

"Are you officers?" asked Frank.

"We are," was the answer.

"Show me your warrant, and I will go with you."

The men presented some papers for his inspection.

Frank glanced hurriedly at the papers, and with an exclamation of amazement learned the fact that the warrant called for his arrest on the charge of abduction, and the complainant was Mr. Palmedo.

"Come, get on your clothes," said the men, "you see our authority."

"I will go with you," said Frank, "but pray be patient for a moment; this affair has unmanned me. How long has Miss Palmedo been missing?"

One of the men answered:

"Miss Palmedo has been missing for two days, but you are a cruel one to ask that question, seeing as you were the chap who carried her away."

"I would to Heaven I had carried her off!" ejaculated Frank, "and I would have saved her life."

The two officers glanced at each other significantly, and one of them asked:

"Is she dead?"

Frank saw the point, and answered:

"I fear she is dead!"

"Then you admit that you abducted the gal?"

"I admit nothing," answered the youth, and he proceeded to dress himself.

Twenty minutes later, the rich and proud Frank Midgely passed beneath the gloomy portals of the Tombs, a prisoner.

Lucy Palmedo had left home, informing the housekeeper that she intended to call upon a friend.

Evening came, but she did not return.

When Mr. Palmedo reached his home, his first inquiries were for his daughter.

The housekeeper sent to the house where Lucy had said she was going.

The servant returned with the information that Miss Palmedo had not been at the house that day at all.

The housekeeper did not dare to keep the news from Mr. Palmedo any longer.

Entering the library, she told him that she was very much alarmed at Lucy's long absence.

"What time did my daughter go out?"

"This forenoon."

"At what hour did she say she would return?"

"She said she would be home at two o'clock at the very latest, as she expected a lady visitor."

"Did the lady visitor come?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Palmedo proceeded up the stairs to his daughter's room.

There was a stern and troubled look upon his brow.

He found his daughter's clothing and jewels all in their usual places.

If she had run away voluntarily, she went with only the clothes upon her person, and made no preparations for removing any portion of the balance.

He immediately ordered his carriage and visited every residence that his daughter was in the habit of frequenting.

He learned no tidings of her.

It was eleven o'clock when he returned to his home.

In the hall he met the housekeeper, and the first words of the latter sent a cold chill through his heart.

"Have you found her, sir?" came the question.

"Has she not returned yet?" asked the father.

Again Mr. Palmedo entered his carriage.

This time he drove direct to police headquarters.

An alarm was sent to every station to learn if any accident had befallen any lady in any of the precincts.

It had been a day remarkable for no serious accidents.

The father, who was well known, was referred to the detectives' office.

An officer was detailed to go with Mr. Palmedo to his house.

They reached the house, and the officer, at his own request, was led by him to the missing girl's room.

The housekeeper was summoned, when he asked the strange question:

"Did Miss Palmedo change her dress before she went out?"

The housekeeper flushed at what she evidently considered an impertinent question for a man to ask, but answered:

"Yes, sir."

"Will you point out the dress she wore this morning?"

She did as desired.

The detective went through the dress in quick order, but not meeting with any success, said:

"Please show me the dress the young miss wore yesterday evening."

The second dress was pointed out, when the officer thrust his hand in the pocket, and drew forth a little missive.

Stepping beneath the gas-light, he glanced at the contents of the note.

Instantly a triumphant smile played over his

features, and, passing the note to the father, he exclaimed in a satisfied tone:

"There, sir; what did I tell you?"

Mr. Palmedo, with features distorted with various emotions, seized the note, and read as follows:

"TO LUCY, IN HASTE,—Darling, I must see you to-morrow afternoon. If you do not meet me, you will hear of some terrible calamity a few hours after the hour for the meeting has passed. I know that you have promised your father not to meet me, and I shall never ask you again to disregard your promise, but I must see you just once. If you do not meet me, my blood will be upon your head. It is not as though I were asking you to continued meetings, I only want to see you this once, and I will never trouble you more. Remember, if you do not meet me, you may regret your refusal all your life, and have ever before your eyes my mangled body. Oh, dear one, do not drive me to such an alternative, but meet me, and I swear never to ask you to break your promise to your father again. Yours, FRANK."

"P. S.—Meet me at the place mentioned in my note of yesterday, and at the same hour. Yours, F. M."

Mr. Palmedo's face assumed a terrible hue as he read. When he had perused the note to the end, he said, in strange, constrained tones:

"This note does not confirm your theory."

"Why, yes it does," said the detective.

"No, sir; every word proves something entirely different."

"And what does the note prove, sir?"

"It proves that an infamous and daring abduction has taken place."

A detective does not like to admit a mistake, and the officer in this, no matter how much convinced that Mr. Palmedo was right, would not admit.

"This note only proves that it required considerable persuasion to induce the young lady to consent."

"It proves that a threat induced her to consent to a last interview! Only the interview was sought with the purpose of abduction, and I know who the thief is!"

"The latter fact, sir, may change the aspect of the affair," said the detective.

CHAPTER XI.

THE days passed, and no tidings were received of the missing girl.

During all this time Frank had been going to and fro from his hotel in the most open manner.

He was still registered under an assumed name, however, and this latter fact probably accounted for the officers' ill success.

At length one of the officers met Frank one day on the street.

The detective had been furnished with a description of him, and recognized him at once.

He followed, and finally "piped" him to the hotel, and the arrest was made as described.

Frank had been about an hour in his cell in the Tombs, when the door opened, and Mr. Palmedo entered, accompanied by one of the detectives.

Rushing toward the prisoner, the father of the missing girl exclaimed:

"Where is my child? How dare you steal my child?"

"I did not steal your child! I do not know where she is! Would to Heaven that I did, as I fear the worst."

"What do you fear, young man?" asked the detective.

"I fear that she is dead!"

"Who would kill her?"

"Her life was attempted once by a mysterious assassin. I fear the fiend has at last accomplished his purpose."

"Was your daughter's life threatened once?" asked the detective, turning toward Mr. Palmedo.

"No, sir!" was the emphatic reply.

"What does this young man mean?"

"He is referring to a masquerading scene in which he acted the disguised assassin himself, for the purpose of intimidating my daughter or myself, or both of us!"

Frank recognized the drift of the father's suspicions, and at once exclaimed, in the most vehement manner:

"That is false. Was I not struck down by the same shadow-like murderer?"

"Are you the youth who was stabbed in front of the — Hotel?"

"I am."

Addressing the father, the detective asked:

"What was the date on which your daughter was assailed?"

The father mentioned the date, when the officer said:

"One thing is certain, sir, this young man could not have been an actor in the bedroom scene of which you told me, as at that time he was lying upon his back at the hotel."

"He could have employed an agent to do the masquerading for him."

The detective, addressing Frank, asked:

"Did you not have a hand in the abduction of Miss Palmedo?"

"No, sir."

"Did you not have an interview with her day before yesterday?"

"No, sir."

"Did you not write a note to her, beseeching her to meet you?"

"No, sir."

"Your real name is Frank Midgely?"

"Yes, sir."

The detective handed him the letter, saying:

"Will you still deny all knowledge of the missing girl?"

"That note is a forgery. I never wrote it."

"Is it not in your handwriting?"

"It is written in a hand which resembles mine, but I never wrote it."

The detective was puzzled.

A longer interview failed to improve the chances of a confession, and the two men left.

The following day Frank was brought before the District Attorney.

Walton Sprague had received a telegram, and was on hand.

The prisoner proved that he did not send the notes.

The moment his handwriting was shown, the forgery became apparent.

Whether Mr. Palmedo was satisfied or not, the legal officers were, and Frank went forth a free man, without having had the affair made public.

That same evening our hero and the detective were in the former's room at the hotel.

Both were dressed in rough clothes as a disguise, and both armed.

"You can set your mind at rest, Frank," said the detective, "they have not murdered Lucy."

His theory was that the assassin had been struck by her loveliness, and that at the critical moment *his purpose had been changed*.

Aldema had shown him some ship's papers.

The detective had pretended to merely glance at them, but in reality he had learned some facts from them.

The moment he learned of Lucy's absence his mind had turned to the mysterious brig from the Mediterranean.

He had searched the wharves, and had identified the vessel.

He felt satisfied that Lucy had been or was to be smuggled aboard.

The vessel had hauled out into the stream, and the officer had formed a desperate plan for boarding her.

* * * * *

About midnight two rough-looking men strolled down toward the water on the East River side of the city.

The point was far above the location of the docks, and at a lonely point, removed from the rounds of the police.

The two men walked down to the water's edge and waited.

A boat, capable of holding half a dozen men, rocked on the little waves that broke upon the shore.

A few moments passed, and the two men were joined by two others, who came stealthily through the darkness.

They were all rough, determined-looking chaps, with fierce, scarred faces, and swaggering manners.

They were all openly armed, and looked as much like pirates as anything else.

"Have you any idea what the 'nob' has on hand?" asked one of the men of another, who appeared to be a sort of leader.

"Well, yes, 'culls,' for once we are going on an honest errand, although we go in the old style."

"What is the racket?"

"Well, a gal has been stolen, and the 'nob' thinks she's aboard a brig that's anchored down-stream."

"Are you sure it ain't a put-up job on us?"

"Nary a job; and if we make the right light to-night, it's a couple of hundred apiece; and a twenty note hit or miss!"

The men waited a full hour, and all but the leader began to grow impatient, when two figures were seen coming down toward the water.

"There they are, my hearties, and by ginger! I hope the gal's aboard the brig—and she's worth two hundred apiece, solid, remember!"

As the two figures approached, one of them uttered a low whistle.

The leader of the gang returned the signal, and the two men advanced.

"Everything ready, Nagle?" said one of them.

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Got your oars muffled?"

"Ay, ay, sir, we'll steal on the craft as noiseless as a snow-flake; we are used to it, you know," added the man, with a meaning laugh.

The six men entered the boat.

The leader took the helm.

He was the one who had been employed by the detective to watch the suspicious brig, and he consequently knew just where she lay.

Rapidly the boat containing the six well-armed men was propelled over the dark waters; and soon the dark outlines of a vessel, anchored in midstream, loomed out of the darkness.

The moment the vessel appeared in sight, the rowers slackened up, and the muffled oars were placed on the oars, and they approached the vessel as noiseless as a snow-flake.

All the plans had evidently been arranged beforehand, as not a word was exchanged while the leader of the river pirates, who had removed his boots, crawled by to the brig, with the noiseless movement and springing agility of a cat.

Nagle had thus scaled the prow of many a vessel under similar circumstances, and knew well just how to proceed, when, like a snake, he crawled upon the deck.

He saw a human figure some fifteen feet from him.

It was the sailor on watch.

The seaman stood motionless, with his back to the pirate captain.

The latter commenced to crawl along the deck.

The sailor was evidently deeply immersed in his own thoughts; or worse, was sleeping on post in a standing position.

The river pirate crawled to within three feet of the sailor.

Suddenly the former leaped to his feet and sprung forward.

The sailor was borne to the deck, and a knife was held at his throat before he knew what had occurred.

"Utter one word, and I will slit your wind-pipe!" was the first intimation he had of the situation.

Had the sailor intended to make an outcry, he delayed too long to gain his purpose, as, in a twinkling, a gag was forced in his mouth, and he was dragged toward the forward part of the brig.

The river pirate reached over the side of the vessel, and uttered a low signal.

In a moment the detective was stealing up the anchor chains, and stood beside the pirate.

Quick work followed.

The sailor was handcuffed at both wrists and ankles.

Another man was summoned from the boat.

The latter was placed as a guard over the bound and gagged sailor.

Thus far matters had worked to a charm.

The river pirate captain held a few moments' conversation with the detective, and then moved away along the deck.

Noiselessly, but swiftly, the fellow traversed the deck.

Like a sergeant of the guard, he made the grand rounds of the vessel, and returned beside the detective.

"Not a soul on deck!" he whispered.

The other men were now called from the boat on to the deck of the brig.

Silently one after another they stole, cat-like, up the chains, and soon six resolute, well-armed men were gathered on the vessel.

The pirate captain well knew how to proceed to guard against accidents.

He stationed his men around, and then he and the detective, with Frank Midgely, moved toward the companion-way, pistols in hand.

The cabin door was unfastened.

Walton Sprague stepped over the threshold, pistol in hand.

His companions were ordered to remain without, until they heard a given signal.

A lamp was suspended from the ceiling and its shadowed light cast sickly gleams about.

The detective was so intent upon the business which had brought him that he did not observe an object lying upon the floor.

He tripped against it, and with a loud noise fell forward.

The next instant a piercing shriek broke the stillness.

The voice was that of a female, and it was a cry of terror.

The officer, for a moment, after having regained his feet, stood transfixed with wonder and astonishment.

He moved cautiously forward, expecting every moment to see a number of armed men leap from behind a crimson cloth which divided the fore part of the cabin from the rear.

Suddenly a hand was laid heavily upon his shoulder.

He turned and encountered Frank Midgely.

The two men had not time to exchange words, when a report sounded through the cabin, and the next moment the contracted apartment was enveloped in flames.

It was the depending crimson screen which was on fire.

Walton Sprague leaped forward and tore it down.

A horrible sight met his gaze.

On the cabin floor lay a human figure in flames.

The detective flung the still smoldering scarlet cloth toward Frank, with the command to stamp out the fire, while he promptly assisted the writhing figure before him.

The fire was quickly extinguished, when the mystery was partially explained.

The man on the floor was a fierce-featured, blazing-eyed fellow, with a complexion almost black.

In the fellow's hand was a pistol, which in his wild writhings he had retained still firmly grasped.

The fierce-looking creature was dressed in flowing robes, which were partly burned.

The moment the fire was extinguished, Frank Midgely had left the detective to deal with the scorched man, while he searched the three or four berths.

One berth was curtained with a heavy blue cloth.

The young man's hand was upon the curtain, when instinctively he drew back.

The scream of terror had come from a female.

It may have come from behind that very curtain.

Frank Midgely was too much of a gentleman to thus rush upon the privacy of a stranger, or even a friend.

He spoke, moving his hand across the curtain, to indicate that his words were addressed to whoever might be the occupant of the berth.

There came no answer to his words.

Frank's attention was distracted from the berth a moment later by a scene of excitement.

The man with a turban about his head had snatched a cimeter from the cabin wall, and had commenced a violent assault on the detective, while the latter was in the very act of allaying the pain of the ingrate's wounds.

The detective had received a severe cut before he had become aware of the miscreant's intention.

The officer's pity was turned to another feeling as he drew his pistol and aimed it at the black-faced murderer's heart.

The cap snapped, while the gleaming cimeter cleft the air, and the next moment the detective's hand would have been severed from his arm, when the arm of the assassin was seized from behind, and he was borne to the floor.

"I'll fix him so that he'll not give us any more trouble," remarked Walton Sprague, as he handcuffed the man and tightly bound him at the ankles.

"How did the fire originate?" asked Frank.

"The fellow fired at us through the screen, and the blaze from his weapon ignited the curtain, and his long, flowing robes took fire at the same instant."

"I wonder where the crew is?" asked Frank.

"If they are not in the forecabin all hands must be ashore," answered the detective.

"Where did that scream come from?" asked Frank, glancing at the berth with the curtain before it.

"We will investigate," said the detective, and for the first time his eyes fell upon the berth hidden by the blue curtain.

Professional experience overcame the sense of

delicacy on the detective's part, and seizing hold of the curtain, he tore it aside.

Both men gave a start upon beholding what was revealed.

There, plainly distinguishable, was the outlines of a human form.

The head and face were covered as though in terror; a dark curl, however, which protruded, suggested the sex of the occupant of the berth.

Both men were astonished, not the least movement betrayed that the sleeper lived, or had been awakened.

Frank clutched the detective's arm, and said, in an excited whisper:

"Lower the curtain; it is not Lucy."

"It may not be Lucy," said the matter-of-fact detective, little dreaming what fate had in store for him, as he added: "But it must have been the utterer of the shriek of terror we heard."

Gently he drew down the covering from over the hidden head.

He had some difficulty in so doing, as the coverlet was tightly held in the sleeper's clasped fingers.

The detective, however, succeeded after a moment in drawing down the bed-clothing, when the face and head of a maiden was disclosed.

The first impression of the two men was that the girl was dead.

The detective quickly decided, however, that insensibility was the result of a faint, and he at once resorted to the application of restoratives.

Frank Midgely stood lost in admiration of the beautiful face.

The complexion was dark, but clear and lovely as an eastern houri is.

The features were the perfection of classic beauty, and the little mouth, circled by two rosy lips, was the most exquisite he had ever gazed upon.

The detective had had considerable experience with fainting women, and soon had the pleasure of hearing the stranger sigh.

An instant later two beautiful dark eyes opened, and their glance was fastened upon his face.

CHAPTER XII.

The detective spoke to the beautiful girl, but she only stared at him in mute surprise.

Frank Midgely stepped forward and addressed the girl in French.

Instantly a ravishing smile overspread her features, and she made answer:

"Who are you? how came you here? are you friend or foe?"

Frank answered the last question first, saying:

"We are friends if you are in need of friends."

"Are you an American?"

"I am."

Then the girl murmured:

"I am safe!" and added a thankful exclamation.

"Have you been in peril?" asked Frank.

"I am now in peril."

"What menaces you?"

"I am a prisoner, and that horrible black fellow has been my jailer ever since I have been on board this vessel."

"How did you happen to be on board of this vessel?"

"I was stolen and smuggled on board."

"For what reason?"

"Oh! monsieur, I can not tell! I am poor; I have no friends; the man who followed me for days before I was made prisoner, had an evil face."

The girl had told enough.

Frank Midgely had guessed the truth, and knew that it was not necessary to press for information in that direction.

During the dialogue between the lovely dark-faced damsel and our hero, the detective stood by, wondering what in thunder the two young people could be talking about.

"Come, Frank," he said, "please explain matters."

Frank spoke a few words rapidly to the detective.

The latter understood the situation at once.

"Ask the girl if there have been any other prisoners on board beside herself."

Frank asked the question, and received a negative reply.

Our hero held a few moments' further conversation with the girl, and then made known its purport to the detective.

The latter told Frank to remain with the

young lady while he went and had a few moments' conversation with the river pirate captain.

The detective and the captain proceeded to the fore-castle, and, after an examination, became convinced that the sailor and the black-faced fellow, lying bound in the cabin, were the only two men, attached to the vessel, who were on board.

In the meantime Frank had intimated to the young French girl that he would retire while she prepared to accompany them ashore.

The detective returned to the cabin just as Frank had given the above intimation.

Walton, learning that Frank had promised the girl to take her ashore, said:

"We must not do anything of the kind."

"And why not?"

"We must use the young girl there in the berth as a decoy duck."

"What advantage would there be in that?"

"Should we remove her, Lucy would never be brought on board, and we might fail ever to find her. If we leave the girl, after having instructed her to play her part, we will be set down as common river pirates, and the original programme of the owners of this brig will not be changed."

At this moment the river pirate rushed into the cabin and announced that a boat was approaching the brig filled with men.

The detective went upon deck, followed by Frank.

They were not a moment too soon.

The dip of oars was heard near by, and the sound of voices.

Frank was directed to go over the side of the vessel and get in the boat.

The youth refused.

He calculated that possibly Lucy might be a prisoner with the crew.

The detective had the same idea, and that was the reason that he wished Frank to go over into the boat.

Should it prove that their impressions were correct, the impetuous young man might spoil everything by rashly rushing in amidst the gang, who were undoubtedly well armed.

"Heavens, Frank," exclaimed the detective, "you will ruin our chances!"

"No, sir; you can trust my courage."

"It is not your courage I mistrust, but your prudence."

"You can trust my prudence."

"On your honor, will you promise not to make a move except at my command?"

"Yes, I will promise."

"All right! I will trust you."

The next moment the boat grated against the side of the brig.

All hands had gone over the side of the brig in the detective's party save the latter and Frank.

The two men dropped upon the deck behind a coil of rope and watched.

From their position they commanded a view of the deck, and could plainly see every movement of the party from the boat as they came aboard.

Two men passed through the rail cut.

One of them was Captain Aldema; the other the detective recognized as the fellow who had been with Aldema when the latter had played the part of the captain of the brig.

The other men, ten in number, were dark-faced piratical-looking men, whom the detective had never seen before.

There was no woman brought aboard, nor anything in which a person could possibly have been concealed.

The detective whispered to Frank:

"They have not brought out any prisoners."

"And that proves that Lucy has been killed," said Frank, in a low, husky voice.

"Not by any means," replied the detective, adding: "We must steal over the side of the vessel, and get into the boat before we are discovered."

The two men did not have time for further discussion as to what they would do.

Captain Aldema and his companion upon boarding the vessel had gone straight to the cabin.

There they had found the black fellow with the white turban lying upon the floor.

From him they learned a portion of what had occurred.

The man had represented the visitors as river pirates.

As he could not understand the conversation which had taken place in either French or En-

glish, he did not have the least suspicion of the true facts.

When the detective and Frank saw the two men rush by the companion-way, they made up their minds that it was time to leave.

Unfortunately they had lingered too long.

Their retreat toward the boat had been cut off.

The two men drew their pistols, resolved to fight for their lives.

At the same moment their presence was discovered by the crew.

The latter made no immediate outcry, as in the darkness they were unable to distinguish whether the two men were friends or foes.

They made a rush, however, toward Frank and the detective, when the latter heard a voice call from the water below on the side nearest to him:

"Jump overboard!"

Both sprang to the side of the brig and leaped over.

Their act betrayed them as foes, and the crew of the brig set up a shout as they rushed to the side rail over which the two men had disappeared.

In the meantime our hero and his companion had struck the water within a few feet of where the boat was, and were soon drawn aboard.

In the same instant several flashes illuminated the side of the brig, and a number of bullets cut the water, and rattled against the boat.

The pirate captain had his men at their oars, and the latter had commenced pulling away at once.

A few lusty strokes and they were beyond pistol range.

"Now what shall we do?" asked the captain of the pirates.

"Pull up stream to the point from whence we started."

In a short time the dark line of docks became visible in dim outline.

"We are all right, boss!" remarked the river pirate captain, with a chuckle.

"Now, boys," he added an instant later, addressing the rowers, "give her the 'cop dodge' trick."

The men well understood what was required of them.

With a heavy stroke they shot past the bulkhead of the pier, when suddenly by a most skillful use of the oars, the two men acting together, they swung the boat around as though she had been upon a pivot, and forced her under the docks between the spiles.

Thus they passed from dock to dock.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FEW moments later the detective and Frank were put ashore.

The officer had held a few moments' conversation with the pirate captain before separating.

Walton Sprague had laid all his plans to guard against the sailing of the brig without his knowledge.

He knew where the police boat, with steam up, could be communicated with at a moment's notice, and it would have been impossible for the mysterious sailing vessel to get away as long as her movements were known.

Two days passed.

The brig still lay at anchor in the stream and she was under constant watch.

The detective was sitting one day in the reading-room of the hotel, when his attention fell upon an editorial in a daily paper.

The article in question was a review of the fact that within a few weeks there had been so many cases of mysterious disappearance, and in almost every case the missing parties had been young and beautiful!

He at once associated the mysterious brig with the fearful work.

"Oh! I wish I could speak French!" he muttered.

"What would you do if you could speak French?" spoke a voice at his side.

Looking up the detective recognized Frank Midgely.

"I think I could solve this mystery!"

"What mystery?"

"The mystery which envelops the object of the cruise of that brig which floats off there on the East River."

"I can speak French?" said Frank in a suggestive tone.

"Could you play detective for a few days?"

"Yes."

"Assume disguises, and associate with drunken sailors? And do as drunken sailors do?"

"Yes; I could do all that you mention."

"By thunder!" exclaimed the real detective, "I wish I could feel that you could be trusted to play a part."

"I can!"

The next day Frank Midgely was equipped and instructed to play his part.

He was a yachtsman and had made several voyages in ships, his father having been a great ship owner.

This fact enabled him to play well the part he had undertaken, as he was well up in the nautical terms and slang phrases of common sailors.

The detective, as we have said, had "piped" the sailors of the brig to their haunts, but had been unable to gather any information.

In one of the streets running parallel with the East River there resided, a few years ago, a remarkable character who kept a sailor's boarding-house.

The man was known as Kanaka Tom, from a suspicion that he was a native of the Sandwich Islands; although no one was really certain as to his nationality, as in the same day he would claim half a dozen different lands as the place of his birth, and could converse in at least as many different languages.

It was at Kanaka Tom's house that the sailors from the mysterious brig were in the habit of congregating; and it was to this dangerous resort that our hero was to go.

He reached the place, and managed the opening part of his dangerous game very successfully.

He got acquainted with Kanaka Tom, and seemingly succeeded in winning the strange man's confidence, as far as it was possible for any one to do so.

Two days passed; and Frank had not seen any of the brig's crew.

One day, however, he had been lounging around, when a strange, noisy party entered.

Our hero had received an accurate description of the men he was to affiliate with, and at once recognized the new-comers as the men he was waiting for.

The character he had assumed was that of a deserter from a French man-of-war, which had been sojourning in New York waters a few weeks previously.

The sailors from the brig had been but a moment in the place when our hero discovered that they did not use the French language, but spoke in a tongue which was unknown by him.

The party were soon seated at a table, and engaged in an innocent game of dominoes.

Frank sat watching them, when he became aware that he was an object of attention on their part as well.

Thus matters proceeded for some time, when a new party entered the place.

Frank gave a start.

One glance sufficed to satisfy him as to the identity of the new-comer.

The man was in disguise, being dressed in the garb of a common sailor, but there was no mistaking the fiery glance of those strange eyes.

It was Hamud, who had thus far proved like the shadow of evil to our hero.

Had Frank failed to identify Hamud, he would have known at once that the new-comer was in disguise; and a person of some consequence in the eyes of the other sailors, as, despite the fact of his appearing like one of them, they treated him with the most marked deference.

Several times Hamud had glanced toward our hero, but it had been merely a passing look of curiosity which any stranger might fix upon another.

Kanaka Tom after having given his attention for some time to the domino players, at length seated himself beside Frank.

The latter had taken lodgings at the house, and during his short stay had thrown his money around pretty freely.

"What vessel do these men belong to?" asked Frank.

"A brig from Jaffa, a city on the Mediterranean coast."

"Do any of them speak English or French?"

"That chap speaks English," answered Tom, indicating Hamud.

A moment later he pointed out one of the sailors who spoke French.

"In what trade is the brig engaged?" said Frank.

"Fruit," said Tom, but there was an underground meaning in his tone.

Frank did not propose to rush matters in making the sailors' acquaintance lest he might arouse their suspicions, so after a little while he sauntered out of the house.

In the evening he returned.

The sailors from the brig were all gone, but a few moments after Frank's entrance one of them came in.

The one who entered was the same who had been pointed out as the one who could converse in French.

A moment later, Hamud, like a shadow, glided into the room, and, although he appeared not to notice our hero, was watching every movement.

Frank was engaged in a friendly conversation with the Greek sailor, when a second new-comer entered the place.

The latter was a drunken Irish sailor, and he was accompanied by several other tars of various nationalities.

The Irish sailor reeled around the common reception-room of the hotel for a little while, and then settled on a settee and soon fell off into a maudlin slumber.

He had been sleeping heavily for some time, when suddenly a low buzz of conversation which had been maintained between Frank Midgely and the Greek sailor, resulted in loud and excited words.

The excitement was displayed by the Greek sailor.

Frank Midgely was cool and kept his seat, while the Greek had risen and was shaking his fists in our hero's face.

Frank rose from his seat and started to move away, when, suddenly, the Greek sprang toward him with a knife in his hand.

Frank, by a dexterous blow, knocked the fellow down.

The sailor was on his feet in a moment, and made a second rush at our hero, when the latter brought him to bay by presenting a pistol at him.

In the *mélée* Frank had changed his position so that he stood in the center of the room with his back to Hamud.

With a noiseless movement the latter rose from his seat and stole toward him.

The Greek attracted Frank's attention, so that he was unaware of the cat-like approach of the assassin stealing behind him.

Hamud, like a shadow, had approached, and his treacherous hand was upraised, when suddenly a dull thud sounded through the room, and the slender-limbed murderer fell to the floor.

Frank stepped back while still facing the Greek, when he tripped on the body of Hamud.

He fell over upon the floor, when the Greek sailor leaped forward to fall upon him, but a heavy blow on the head sent him sideways to the ground.

It was the drunken Irish sailor who had felled both assassins.

When Frank rose to his feet he saw the Irishman drawing something from the hand of the insensible Hamud.

Our hero was just about to thank the man, who had singularly lost all appearance of drunkenness, when, in a familiar voice he heard the words:

"We must slide, Frank; things are getting hot!"

The speaker was Walton Sprague, the detective.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Frank, "is that you?"

Steps were heard approaching, and the detective moved toward the door, beckoning Frank to follow him.

As they passed out, they met the balance of the brig's crew just entering the place.

CHAPTER XIV.

"We must move like lightning," whispered the detective, "or we will be hacked to mince-meat by that gang as soon as they discover what has occurred."

The two men reached their hotel without accident, when Frank asked:

"How did you happen to be on hand just in the nick of time to save my life?"

"I have been shadowing you every hour since your first entrance into that place."

"It is strange that I didn't recognize you! But how did you happen to enter just as you did?"

"I had been shadowing Hamud. And now I will show you something curious and terrible,"

continued the detective; and he held toward Frank a long, slender piece of steel about the heft of a darning-needle, and as sharp at the point as a sewing-needle.

"What is that?" asked Frank.

"That is a poisoned weapon, which that evil-faced Hamud was about to thrust into your back when I felled him to the floor with the butt of my pistol."

Frank could not avoid a shudder, as he contemplated the mysterious weapon.

A few days following Walton Sprague announced that the time had arrived for them to pay a second visit to the brig.

The detective had received word that several strange-looking packages had been taken on board, attended with the intimation that it was not impossible that a female might have been concealed in one of them.

Another significant incident was the fact that the brig had been towed down into the bay, and was anchored off the Long Island shore.

A spy was on board of the tug which steamed her down to her new anchorage, and he was able to ascertain that there was no immediate intention to sail.

Early in the evening, the detective and our hero took a carriage and crossed the Hamilton Ferry to Brooklyn.

From the ferry they were rapidly driven toward the Long Island Bay village known as Bay Ridge, off which the brig was anchored, and, leaving the carriage at the mouth of the lane which leads from the main road to the beach, they proceeded on foot.

As they turned from the lane into the shore road, they noticed a number of men coming from the beach toward a tavern.

They were talking in an excited manner in a foreign language.

The detective saw them just in time to draw Frank beneath the shadow of a tree.

"They are a portion of the crew of the brig," he whispered.

The sailors entered the tavern, when our friends noticed a solitary figure stealing by, over the verge of the ridge, with stealthy and cautious movements.

"That must be one of my men piping the crew," whispered the detective, and leaving his hiding-place, he approached the crouching man.

As he drew near, the man, who was evidently trying to avoid observation, moved down the bank.

Sprague uttered a low signal.

It was instantly answered, and the retreating man came over into the road.

"Is that you, my man?" asked the detective.

"Ay, ay!" was the answer from the river pirate captain, who had been of such excellent service upon the occasion of the former visit to the brig.

"Who has gone into the tavern?" asked Sprague.

"The majority of the crew of the brig."

"Who is on board?"

"I think only the watch, and possibly one or two of the crew."

The detective began to revolve several plans in his mind.

It was his object to keep the men from going on board again until he had made his purposed search of the vessel from stem to stern.

"How many men have you?" Sprague asked.

"Six besides myself," was the reply.

"I wish we could invent any plan to insure the keeping of the members of that crew from attempting to go aboard. I would like to avoid a fight if I could."

"It could be done," said the pirate captain, "if we could only get the landlord of the tavern to work with us."

The tavern-keeper's house adjoined the saloon.

The detective knew that the latter could have no interest with the crew, and would most likely fall into any scheme which might be set to work.

The question was: How could the landlord be seen?

It was already after midnight.

Sprague strolled toward the tavern and stepping upon the piazza peeped through the closed blinds.

There was at least a dozen of the crew assembled in the common bar-room, while a man, evidently the proprietor, was behind the bar attending to their wants.

The sailors apparently had no immediate intention of returning to their vessel, as part of them were playing dominoes, while the balance were throwing dice over the bar.

Resolving upon a wild scheme the detective

returned and held a few moments' consultation with the river pirate captain and Frank, when all three moved down the steep bank toward the rocky shore.

At a short distance up the beach, they came to a point where a small unused dock extended out into the water.

Going upon the dock, the river pirate captain uttered a low signal, when a boat crept out from under the dock like a snail crawling from its shell.

Six men were in the boat, and when ordered they ran her on to the beach and stepped ashore.

The detective's design at once became apparent.

He commenced exchanging different parts of clothing with different members of the party.

As the river pirates were dressed like river boatmen, Sprague was soon able to equip himself so that he presented the appearance of a bay fisherman to the life.

Having rigged himself, he exchanged a few more words with the river pirate captain, and then started back alone toward the tavern.

He rapped boldly but received no answer.

For a moment only did he permit this little obstacle to cause him any discouragement.

The detective rapped loudly, in fact actually "banged" at the door, like a man who was determined to be heard.

At length a voice from the inside called:

"Who's there?"

"Open the door!"

"I am closed for the night."

"I'll bang the door down if you do not open it."

"If you do not go away, I will come out there and bang you for making such a rumpus."

The latter action was just what the officer desired, and he was continuing his attack upon the door, when suddenly a hand was laid upon his shoulder.

"Here, what do you mean making a row around here at such an hour?" came the inquiry, in an angry voice.

"Who are you?"

"I am the man who runs this hotel, and if you do not start, I'll run you down on the dock and overboard."

The landlord, instead of opening the door, had gone around through a rear entrance, and had come to the front piazza, feeling that if he did not open the door the man might force an entrance.

He thought it was a drunken man he had to deal with, and the detective had encouraged such an idea; but now, when they stood face to face, his manner changed entirely.

"Say, boss," he exclaimed, "just walk this way with me a moment. I have something to say to you."

As he spoke he produced a dark-lantern, and showed his shield as an officer.

"Ah, ha!" exclaimed the landlord, "you're a 'cop' in disguise?"

"I am a detective attending to my business, and any man who interferes with me does so at his risk, as I have a posse of men ready to answer my signal."

"Who are you after? One of those sailors in there?"

"No; I am after information which I wish to get from them."

"What do you want with me?"

"I want you to lay in with me, and make out that you are acquainted with me."

"You want to play off as a fisherman?"

"Yes."

"All right! I am the man to assist you; I used to be on the force myself once."

"I am going for a big stake, and if you help me to pull through all right, you will be a hundred dollars richer to-morrow morning."

The landlord chanced to be in just that financial condition that a hundred dollars ready cash was like saving him from ruin, and he said:

"You can rely on me; I have no game in with them tar-greasers inside."

Giving the landlord some further instructions, the detective recommenced his attack on the door, and a few seconds later the voice from the inside called out:

"If you don't go away from there, I'll send a bullet through the door."

"You wouldn't shoot an old friend, would you?" called the detective.

"Who are you?"

"Why, don't you know my voice?"

"Is it Hank Randall?"

"Why, of course it is."

"Why in thunder didn't you say so?" and

the next moment the bolts were slipped aside, and the detective staggered into the bar-room.

As the landlord appeared to know him, and as he looked like an ordinary fisherman, he only received a passing notice from the sailors.

He lost no time in proceeding about the business he had in hand.

He observed the bottle the sailors were drinking from, and managed to indicate slyly to the landlord that he wanted to drink out of the same bottle.

When that bottle went back to its place on the shelf behind the bar it was doctored.

A few moments passed, and the sailors took their drink all round from the same bottle, and as the seemingly drunken fisherman saw them do so a peculiar smile played over his face.

A few minutes passed, and one after another of the sailors began to yawn and rub their eyes.

Two or three of the men stretched out like drunken men, and dropped off asleep.

At the same moment there came a rap at the outside door.

The door was opened, and Hamud, the slender, dark-eyed assassin, entered.

He advanced and spoke to one of the sailors.

The fellow made no reply, but nodded in a half-maudlin, sleepy manner.

With a number of strange words falling from his mouth in rapid succession, Hamud passed to different men.

He found them all, as he evidently supposed, helplessly drunk.

Hamud advanced to the bar, and in broken English, which it would have required a practiced linguist to understand, he abused the landlord for making his men drunk.

The landlord protested he had nothing to do with it, as he had only furnished the fellows with what they had called for.

Hamud left the tavern.

The detective followed until he saw a coach drawn to the side of the lane, under the shadow of a large tree.

Hamud opened the door of the coach and conversed in a low tone for a few moments with some one inside.

The detective could not see anything of the driver.

After a moment's conversation Hamud turned from the carriage, and a man stepped from the latter whom the detective instantly recognized as Aldema.

The two men walked down toward the beach.

Walton Sprague stepped behind a tree, and waited until they had passed.

The moment Hamud and Aldema had passed beyond sight, the detective advanced rapidly toward the coach, opening the door, and thrusting his dark-lantern inside, the form of a girl was revealed.

"Who are you?" he asked.

He received no answer, but observing a movement on the part of the female, he placed his hand upon her and drew her toward him, so that his light flashed in her face.

CHAPTER XV.

THE reason that the officer had not received any answer to his query was at once explained.

The girl, who was young and beautiful, was gagged, and also bound hand and foot.

The detective's blood boiled with indignation as he removed the gag, and cut the cords which bound the mysterious prisoner.

He had just succeeded in doing so when he imagined he heard approaching steps, and advancing toward the approaching man, found it was not, as he had feared, Hamud, but Frank.

"Heavens, Frank!" he exclaimed, "there is terrible work going on! I have just found a beautiful girl, bound and gagged, in that coach."

"Who is she?" asked Frank, in an excited and trembling voice, as he advanced toward the coach.

"It is not Lucy, but, by George, we have proof that we are on the right track!"

As they approached, they saw the young lady step out upon the road.

The detective stepped toward her, when the girl attempted to scream.

"Do not scream," cautioned the detective, "it was I who released you. We are friends, and you are safe. Come this way."

He led the girl down the lane a few steps, and then around past the stables, behind the hotel.

Up to this moment he had asked no questions; he now said:

"How was it I found you bound and gagged in that carriage?"

"I am the victim of the most horrible perfidy and treachery," said the girl, whose language betrayed that she was a refined and cultured lady.

They were standing in such a position that they commanded a view of the lane, and before the girl could complete her narration, the detective saw a figure moving up the lane.

"You stay by the girl, Frank," he said, and then moved stealthily toward the man, who was walking up the lane toward the coach.

The detective stole swiftly behind the man, and, when near enough for his purpose, spoke.

The man turned, but before he was fully around the detective was upon him, and had borne him to the ground.

Within the same moment the dexterous officer clapped the handcuffs on the fellow, and had him at his mercy.

The prisoner proved to be Aldema.

The detective dragged the prisoner out of the road, and had just rolled him into a little gully, when he saw a second figure coming up the lane.

Down he dropped at a convenient place, and waited.

The moment the man arrived opposite the officer's hiding-place, the latter darted forward, bore him to the ground, and speedily had him bound, gagged, and handcuffed, as Aldema had been.

When the detective had first seen the last figure advancing by the lane, he had supposed that it was Hamud, but it proved to be another man, evidently one of the crew.

Returning to where Frank and the girl stood, Sprague told the latter that he would place her in charge of the family of the proprietor of the hotel, where she would have to remain until morning.

During the detective's absence, Frank Midgeley had learned from the girl the circumstances of her capture, and had partially explained how the detective had chanced to be on hand to effect her rescue.

The girl was a music-teacher in New York; and strange enough, like the French girl who had been found on the brig, was an orphan, without any known relatives.

She had boarded at a house with a man who represented himself to be an Italian professor of music.

The latter individual had paid her a great deal of attention, and upon that very night had induced her to accompany him to hear a certain famous *prima donna* sing in private.

She had entered a carriage, anticipating to be taken but a few blocks; but once within the coach, a sudden assault had been made upon her, and she had been drugged; when she awoke to consciousness, she found herself bound and gagged as the detective had found her.

All these explanations were made in a few seconds.

The detective entered the tavern.

The sailors were all lying around on the benches and floor in deep slumber.

The landlord suspected that something had been done to throw the men into such a condition, and told the detective that the affair might cost him his life.

The officer gave him assurances which quieted his mind in this respect, and then told him about the girl.

The latter was led into the tavern-keeper's house, while Frank and the detective, after securing the two prisoners in the carriage-house, proceeded down to the beach.

As they walked along, their attention was attracted by a strange colored light, which appeared to flash right off the face of the rocks which formed the ridge.

The detective crawled forward to investigate this fresh mystery.

He discovered the man Hamud.

The latter was burning a light, and evidently signaling to some one on board of the brig.

Rocking on the incoming tide at the foot of the ridge was a boat.

The detective moved forward to secure Hamud as he had Aldema and the other man, but the strange fellow suddenly disappeared, and was lost to view.

The detective examined the spot where he had seen the mysterious man, but could not find the faintest sign of his presence.

While he was standing and revolving the matter in his mind, he was joined by the river pirate chief, who said:

"If we are to go out to the brig, we have no better opportunity than to go at once."

"Did you see any one moving away from this spot?" asked Sprague.

"No."

The detective had come down for a purpose, and felt that time was being lost.

As he did not wish daylight to overtake them, Frank was signaled, and the three men proceeded to where the river pirates had their boat.

A few moments later the latter was headed toward the brig, bearing all hands save one, who was left on shore to watch.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE river pirate captain, as upon a former occasion, proved himself to be a shrewd man. Addressing the detective, he said:

"We must be very cautious in our movements, or we may run into a trap."

"The greater part of the crew are drugged and asleep in the tavern bar-room."

"That may be; but if there are men on board they are not a part of the crew, but they are there for the purpose of guarding against just what we are up to to-night."

"We must take chances!" answered the detective, and no more was said.

The river pirate captain had ordered his men to pull off on an angle, as he wanted to float around with the tide toward the brig on the Staten Island side.

The plan worked well; and when the men had pulled to the proper point, they rested on their oars, and let the boat drift.

The vessel was headed seaward, and the turn of the tide favored them. The boat was secured safely under the fore-chains.

The river pirate captain was the first to ascend to the brig's deck.

The detective followed, and Frank Midgely came third.

The three men were all aboard, and were just preparing to move forward, when suddenly the stillness which until this moment had prevailed, was broken.

The darkness was illuminated by vivid flashes, followed by pistol reports, and several bullets whistled about the invaders' heads.

The men dropped behind a coil of heavy ship's chains, and the firing ceased.

The river pirate captain was the first to speak. "Just as I feared," he remarked.

"There were only four pistols discharged," said the detective.

The latter's well-trained ear at that very moment of peril had been recording this nice calculation.

"If you will lay low, with another man from the boat to stand by you, I will play a trick on these Kanakas."

The detective knew that all confidence could be placed in the river pirate captain when his interests were on the side of right, and he told him to go ahead.

The man crawled along the deck toward the bow chains, and then suddenly rising to his feet, leaped overboard.

At the same moment, however, a shout arose, and a number of white-turbaned chaps leaped forward, and in a moment both Frank and the detective would have been hacked to pieces.

The river pirate captain had not been idle.

At the very moment the brig men shouted and leaped forward, a second shout was heard, and the river pirates, five strong, desperate men, sprung forward, also.

There were five of the brig men to seven in the detective's party.

A struggle commenced, but it was of very short duration.

The brig men were overcome and secured without one man in the boarding party being injured.

The detective, the moment the struggle was over, looked at his watch.

He found it to be half past two in the morning.

The pirate gang were placed on guard over the brig men, and Frank, the pirate captain, and the detective moved toward the cabin.

They descended the companion-way, and started to enter the cabin.

The river pirate captain was in the advance.

He had just stepped over the threshold, when the report of a pistol rang out, and the advance man fell forward.

The detective, who was close behind, sprung over the prostrate body as a second shot was fired.

Bullets do not always strike their mark, even when fired at close range.

The detective escaped unscathed, and the next instant was engaged in a strange combat.

Two men in white turbans and flowing robes, with faces as black as the ace of spades, set upon him with their gleaming, curved cimeters.

The detective held a belying-pin in his hand, and managed for an instant to parry several thrusts, when Frank Midgely rushed in to his assistance.

The latter fired twice in rapid succession, and both of the black men keeled over.

The two white men sprung upon them, and in a trice the fellows were bound like their comrades on deck.

Neither of them had been wounded, as it subsequently proved.

Frank had not aimed at a vital part of their bodies, but had only sought to wound them in their sword arms.

Although he was ordinarily a good shot, in the excitement he had missed his aim, and the two blacks had tumbled over in sheer terror.

The moment the men were prisoners, Sprague and Frank went to the assistance of the river pirate captain.

The latter had not been as fortunate as the others.

He had received a pretty severe wound, but examination proved that it was not necessarily a fatal one.

While the detective was attending to the wounded river pirate, Frank commenced a search for the pretty French girl prisoner, whom he had discovered upon the brig upon their former visit.

There was no one in the cabin.

"Hang it! Walton," he exclaimed, addressing the detective, "the French girl is gone. I feared we should lose her!"

The river pirate captain had been carried to the deck.

The latter, feeling easier, asked what had been discovered.

Upon learning the facts, he said:

"Search the vessel from stem to stern!" and a moment later added: "One of my men, Curly, the sailor, knows a vessel from her keel to her topmast; get him to lead the way."

Curly, the sailor, was a rough-looking fellow, with a scarred face.

When informed as to what was wanted of him, he said:

"All hands remain on deck. I'll just go this alone."

The man took a lantern and asked to be lowered down one of the hatches.

Half an hour passed, when the man signaled to be raised on deck again.

The information he brought was that there was not a living soul below the deck.

The detective felt that his trip was bound to prove a fruitless one, when a cry from one of the men directed his attention aft.

A strange glow was seen shooting up through the companion-hatch.

"Heavens!" exclaimed the detective. "The brig is on fire!"

A rush was made to the rear, but the light had disappeared, but a shriek was heard—a piercing scream—like the one which had startled them upon a previous visit.

The cry came seemingly from the cabin.

Frank and the detective rushed below, and a second search was made.

Not a sign of a living person, beside the two bound blacks, could be found.

The detective ordered the latter carried on deck, when a second shriek was heard.

This time it sounded like a smothered cry, which came directly from beneath their feet.

A suspicion flashed through the detective's mind.

He commenced sounding the floor of the cabin.

His efforts were rewarded by discovering, under one of the berths, a suspicious-looking spot indicative of a trap.

He managed to remove a square about two feet in length and width.

The officer crawled through, and the mystery was revealed.

He descended into a false cabin followed by Frank Midgely.

Four females, young and beautiful, were discovered.

The mission of the brig was disclosed.

Kidnapping, on a large scale, was the object of her commander.

Among the four maidens was the French girl, but not Lucy Palmedo.

They were led upon the deck, and lowered into the boat ready to be taken ashore.

The last one had just been passed over the side of the brig, when one of the men again called the detective's attention to the strange light.

A second investigation was made.

This time an unmistakable odor of fire was discovered.

Further examination revealed the truth, the brig was on fire.

"What shall we do?" asked Frank.

"Raise the anchor and let her drift and burn!" answered the detective in a fierce tone, adding: "By George! if she had not taken fire accidentally, I should have fired her or scuttled her!"

"What will we do with the crew?"

"Put them in the brig's boat, and let them take care of themselves."

A third boat had been secured from the vessel.

The detective ordered the men to hold the boat containing the prisoners in tow, while he and Frank pulled ashore.

Once on shore, he secured the girl who had been rescued from the carriage, and informed the landlord of the hotel concerning what had occurred.

Frank now asked what should be done under the circumstances.

"Nothing," said the detective. "I am glad the brig is on fire, as it will save us a heap of trouble. Had she not got on fire, I would have been compelled to report and arrest all hands of her crew; as it is, they can shift for themselves as best they can."

The officer descended to the beach.

The brig was rapidly drifting away.

The fire had not got beyond the lower decks yet, and the hope was that she would be far out to sea before the fire would burst above decks.

A signal brought the boats ashore.

The four released girls were taken to the landlord's private house.

In the meantime the landlord had received instructions from the detective.

The tavern-keeper went to the stable where the two men were bound and gagged.

He told them that he had come to aid them to escape, saying that the police had boarded the brig, and had made some discovery concerning her; also, that a messenger had been dispatched to New York for assistance, when all hands would be arrested and taken to the city.

The cunning detective had calculated well.

In the meantime all the river pirates had been concealed in the landlord's private house, so as to be ready in case of emergency.

The white-turbaned prisoners had been left bound in the boat.

The landlord, after releasing the two men in the barn, advised them to take their crew, enter their boats, pull over to the Jersey shore, and scatter as best they could.

It was approaching near to dawn.

The sailors had sufficiently recovered from the effects of the drug to be able to comprehend the situation.

The landlord pretended to be acting in a cautious manner as guide.

Every movement was made rapidly and stealthily.

The crew of the brig were all marshaled on the beach.

The bound men in the boats were released, and all hands embarked, and the boats were headed for the Staten Island shore.

Just at the dawn the detective walked out to the ridge.

A solitary boat was seen making for the shore. Walton Sprague watched until the skiff was run on the beach, and then went to meet the rower.

The man who had come in the boat proved to be Curly the sailor.

"Well?" asked the detective.

"It's all right, captain; if she don't sink she'll drift ashore a hopeless wreck."

Curly had remained on board the brig to scuttle her.

Well he did his work, as she was never seen again.

In the meantime startling events followed the incidents of the night.

CHAPTER XVII.

DAY dawned, and found the detective and our hero with the wounded river pirate, and the five rescued ladies on their hands.

The stories of the rescued girls can be briefly told.

They were all orphans, and had been kidnapped in the boldest manner.

The individual experiences of the five girls were almost identical.

Each had become acquainted with a handsome stranger.

The latter had won their confidence, and in the end had betrayed them on board of the mysterious brig.

The girls did not, when rescued, know what their final fate was to have been, and when the detective hinted at the fearful doom from which they had been preserved, their thankfulness was unbounded.

When they returned to the city, Frank Midgely secured the addresses of all the girls, and exacted a promise of secrecy from them.

Our hero also provided them bountifully with money, which he forced upon them.

The most charming of all the rescued lasses was the French girl.

Amalie de Lucenay was indeed beautiful beyond the usual measure of female loveliness.

When once free, with the shadow of terror removed, she gave full freedom to the hundred charms which distinguished her.

One man was dazzled by their brightness, and that luckless individual was the detective.

Frank Midgely was equally lost in admiration of the charming little foreigner, but the charm to him was but momentary.

His thoughts were fixed upon the hardly less beautiful girl, the missing Lucy Palmedo.

A week had passed after the startling adventures of the night when the brig was fired and scuttled.

The detective and our hero had searched the city from end to end.

They had concluded that the missing Lucy was still hidden somewhere in the city.

One fact surprised Walton Sprague—none of the crew of the brig had been seen.

The detective had calculated, in letting them all escape, that it would afford him an opportunity to track them down to the place where the girl was concealed.

Another fact astonished the faithful officer.

He could not account for the seeming indifference of Mr. Palmedo, the girl's father.

The latter did not appear to be taking any step for her recovery.

He had offered a reward, and had settled down to his former business life, and proceeded as though he had never had a daughter.

The detective decided to call upon him.

He found the banker in his counting-room, calm and smiling, as though no dark sorrow was hidden in his breast.

He received the detective coolly, and asked in an indifferent manner:

"Well, sir, what can I do for you?"

"I have come to consult with you, sir, about your missing child."

"Well, what have you got to tell me?" asked the banker, coolly.

"I have met with no encouragement thus far; but I suspect a clew has been ascertained."

"I am very busy," said the banker, with astonishing indifference, "and I have no time to listen to clews; I have been furnished with a thousand clews."

"But if you knew the fate which overhangs your child!"

"I know pretty well, sir; and, to speak plainly, if you have come here to deceive me, or to intercede for my daughter, your mission will prove a failure, and your time is lost."

An idea flashed through the detective's mind. The word *intercede* was the advance light to a revelation.

The banker evidently indulged the idea that his daughter had eloped, and his seeming indifference was explained.

"Let me tell you," said the detective, "you are indulging a false hope."

"And let me tell you, sir," exclaimed the banker, without waiting to hear what the false hope might be, "that you are trespassing on my time, and I wish to bid you good-morning!"

The detective was not to be put off in this manner, and he was proceeding to say something when the banker abruptly retired into his private office, slamming the door behind him.

Further attempt at parley was useless, and Walton Sprague took his departure wondering how such a lovely girl should chance to be the daughter of such a rude and seemingly cruel and indifferent man.

Two months passed.

Still no tidings of the missing girl.

Frank Midgely had grown hopeless of ever seeing her sweet and loving face again.

He had called upon the banker, but had been refused admittance to his presence.

During all this time Walton Sprague had been paying his court to the beautiful French girl, Amalie de Lucenay.

The detective was a handsome man, and owing to the liberality of Frank Midgely, possessed comfortable means, and yet the girl whom he had rescued treated him coldly.

Not coldly as a rule, but only when he approached a certain subject.

Otherwise she appeared to feel grateful for his services in effecting her rescue, and showed no aversion to his society.

She respected him, but evidently did not love him.

The detective was a proud man, and although he did not press his suit like a love-lorn duffer, he made up his mind that in the end she should learn to love him.

Amalie was a proud girl.

She had steadfastly refused to receive money or assistance in any way from Frank Midgely, and was earning her own living, the same as she had done previous to her capture.

Thus matters stood, when one day our hero descended from his room in the hotel, and entered the reading-room.

The first object his eyes rested upon was the dark face and slender form of Hamud, the shadow.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FRANK felt a cold chill go through his heart.

Going to the bar-room, he paced nervously to and fro for a few minutes, when at length the impulse to speak to Hamud became so strong that he resolved to do so.

He returned to the reading-room and glanced toward the seat Hamud had occupied.

Like a shadow only had he appeared, and like a shadow had he vanished.

When Walton Sprague heard of the reappearance of Hamud, he expressed great satisfaction, saying that there was now once more hope of finding Lucy Palmedo.

The detective at once assumed a disguise, and started out in search of the mysterious man, who appeared to be at the bottom of so much evil.

One evening he called at the humble lodgings where Amalie de Lucenay resided.

The girl was employed in a French artificial flower manufactory, a few blocks from where she lodged.

He was informed by the landlady that she had not returned, and looking at his watch, he found that it was nine o'clock.

He did not feel any special alarm, and upon the following morning he called bright and early at Amalie's lodgings, but she had not yet returned.

Going at once to the place where she had been employed, he learned that she had left at the usual hour, the night previous, but had not been seen since.

At once a suspicion flashed through Sprague's mind, and he recalled certain revelations which the girl, in her imperfect way, had made to him, which, in connection with the sudden reappearance of that shadow of evil, Hamud, assumed a startling significance.

He at once hastened to the custom-house, and from the proper clerk learned what vessels had cleared the day before.

There was one vessel which had cleared for a port on the Mediterranean.

He next visited the shipping agents, but from all that he could learn, everything concerning the vessel was straight and clear.

While making his inquiries he observed a sailor-looking chap standing near by, who seemed to take an unwarranted interest in the questions and answers.

When Walton Sprague turned to leave the shipping-office, this man followed him out.

The detective observed this fact, and made up his mind to play off a bit, knowing that the fellow would most likely address him.

His supposition was correct. He had made but few steps when the man's hand was laid upon his shoulder.

"You were making some inquiries about that Mediterranean trader?" said the man.

"I was."

"Were you trying to find out about the two women in veils who went as passengers aboard of her?"

"No, sir."

"Ah! I beg your pardon, then; but, hang me, stranger, you must excuse me for speaking about it, because it was a strange affair."

"I am ready to listen to any strange story you

have to tell; but, in the first place, what do you know about the vessel?"

"Well, I know a good deal about her. I was to have sailed in her, but at the last moment I was paid an extra month's wages and discharged, and it's my mind that I was unshipped because I did know so much."

"If you know anything about the vessel, why don't you report the matter to the police?"

"Well, she's sailed; that's one reason, and I was not discharged and put ashore until the last moment, and the most that I know is only suspicion, after all."

The sailor was quite an intelligent chap, and appeared like a frank, honest fellow.

"I was going to have some lunch," said the detective. "Will you come and eat with me, and you can tell me your story. I would like to hear what you have to tell, anyhow."

Seated in a restaurant, the officer said:

"Now let me hear what you suspect."

"Well, sir, two days ago, while we lay at the dock, a young man came aboard and had a conversation with the captain. I was lying behind a bale of goods which hadn't been lowered below, and without meaning to, overheard a part of the strange talk."

"What kind of a looking chap was the young man who came aboard to talk with the captain?"

"As slender as a bean-pole, and as graceful in his movements as an antelope," and the stranger proceeded and described *Hamud, the Shadow*, to perfection.

"You see, I would have moved away without listening to what the captain and the man was talking about, if it had not been for a suspicion that something was wrong. The slender man told a story about two young ladies who had escaped from a city on the Mediterranean; in fact, from what I could make out, two handsome women had escaped from a harem, and had come to New York. The story was an odd one," continued the sailor, "as the man with the strange eyes offered four times the regular passage money, as he said the women would have to be smuggled aboard, and kept as prisoners during the whole trip."

"And did the captain close with the offer?"

"Not then; he declined to take the women, but afterward he must have made a bargain, as the next night about midnight two women were brought in a boat after the ship had been hauled out and anchored in mid-stream."

"Did you see them brought aboard?"

"I did; and I heard one of the women plead to be released, in good English, and then it struck me that something was wrong, as Turkish women who have lived in harems ain't good linguists, you know. They might gabble French, but not English, nohow."

"Did you report the matter to the shipping agents?"

"I was in there to do so, when I heard you making inquiries about that vessel, and I thought I would tell you first."

"You did right, my man; and what is your name?" asked the detective.

"My name is Tom Jalakei."

"How did you happen to engage for a voyage on that vessel?"

"Well, you see, my mother was a native of England, but my father was a full-blooded Christian Turk, and I have always sailed on vessels bound to Mediterranean ports."

"Do you understand the Turkish languages?"

"Oh, yes; I speak all the modern Oriental dialects."

An idea flashed through the detective's mind, and he said:

"See here, my man, I have an idea that I can secure a very profitable berth for you, if you will give me your name and address."

The sailor gave his address, and was told not to ship until he heard further.

Walton Sprague sought Frank Midgely at once.

The two men held a consultation, and the result was that they came to the conclusion that the two women who had been smuggled on board of the fruit-trader were none other than Amalie de Lucenay and Lucy Palmedo.

Their course was immediately decided upon.

They determined to go in pursuit.

A magnificent and fast-sailing yacht was purchased, and a crew was made up of men calculated for all kinds of service, fighting as well as sailing.

Tom, the river pirate captain, had recovered from his wounds, and was secured along with one or two of his old mates, including Curly the sailor, and Jalakei.

Upon the fifth day following the sailing of the Mediterranean trader, the yacht "Lucy," with a crew of twenty-nine men, under the command of a brave young sailor named Captain Fontain, glided over the waters of the lower bay, and skipped away to sea with a spanking breeze filling her sails.

Captain Fontain had sailed in Mediterranean traders, and knew every port on that sea of any note.

He also knew the sailing capacity of the vessel on which the two girls had been carried as prisoners, and he calculated that he would be able to overhaul her at sea, or at least reach Jaffa, under any circumstances, ahead of her.

All of the latter calculations failed in fulfillment.

The yacht "Lucy" proved to be a fast sailer, but not as staunch a sea-craft as was anticipated; and rough weather compelled her captain several times to run clear out of his course, until at last, when the "Lucy" finally anchored off the port of Jaffa, it was only to learn that the vessel she was to have beaten had been in port four days ahead of her.

The day following her arrival, the yacht "Lucy" was compelled to slip her cable and run out to sea to avoid being driven ashore.

Upon the fourth day Walton Sprague, Frank Midgely, and the sailor, Tom Jalakei, went ashore.

Tom Jalakei was dispatched to make inquiries concerning the mysterious passengers who had left New York on the trading vessel.

He was gone five hours, and when he rejoined the detective and Frank Midgely, he was compelled to confess that he had discovered absolutely nothing.

The detective undertook to go and see what he could discover.

In the calm of the evening he took the yacht boat and four seamen, and made the pretense of a merely friendly visit on board of the merchantman.

The captain and mates of the vessel spoke fair English, and the detective remained on board some time, conversing with them.

Suddenly he remarked in an off-hand manner: "The name of your vessel was handled in the New York papers pretty freely for a few days after your departure."

"It was?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why was the name of my vessel mentioned in the papers?"

"It was reported that two young ladies were brought on board of your vessel in a very suspicious manner just before you sailed."

The captain laughed heartily upon hearing this statement, and acted in any but a suspicious manner.

"I can explain it. Why, sir, it is strange that the incident to which you allude should be associated with two young ladies, and yet I will admit that there were grounds for the suspicion, as two females were brought on board of my vessel just as I was about to sail; but the most remarkable part of the affair was that when the females were once aboard they were suddenly transformed into men. I was about as nicely fooled as any man could be! A stranger came aboard of my vessel just as I was ready to sail, and told me a cock-and-bull story about two Turkish women who had eloped from their lord, and wanted to secure a passage for them on board of my vessel. I refused to take them as passengers, but was finally induced by a large offer to do so."

The detective was beginning to feel rather sick.

An idea was coming over his mind that he and his friend had come on a wild-goose chase.

He asked no questions, while the captain continued and explained the mystery of the two female passengers.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE captain's explanation continued as follows:

"After the pretended young Turkish women were brought aboard, I learned that my two mysterious passengers were two young college students who had got into some scrape, and had determined secretly to escape."

The detective felt a sinking at the heart. He could not for a moment doubt but that the captain had told the truth.

The story was a probable one, and it was easy enough for the sailor, Tom Jalakei, to have been deceived.

"What became of the two students?" asked the detective.

"Oh, they were on board here to-day, and will probably return to-morrow, and if you will come on board, I will introduce them to you. They are Americans, and will probably be glad to meet you."

This last statement settled the matter in the officer's mind, and he returned on board the "Lucy" fully resolved to set sail for New York that very night.

He told the story to Frank Midgely.

While talking to the latter he saw Tom Jalakei approach.

The half-Turk astonished both the detective and our hero by remarking:

"I saw the man to-day, after you had left me, who engaged passage for the two Turkish ladies on board of that vessel over there."

The detective told the man what the captain of the vessel had to say about the matter.

"Come with me to-night, and I will convince you that I told the truth, and that the captain is playing a game."

That same night, a boat containing four persons besides the two sailors who were acting as oarsmen left the yacht.

It was a lonely moonlight night.

The moment the boat grated on the beach, the detective, Frank Midgely, the pirate captain, and Tom Jalakei, leaped ashore and proceeded toward the city's gate.

They had proceeded but half the distance when a figure was seen approaching.

The latter was dressed in flowing robes, and was evidently a Moslem resident of the city.

As he drew near the men stepped to one side of the narrow path to permit him to pass.

The moment the stranger had passed, an exclamation simultaneously went from the lips of three out of the four men who had moved aside to permit him to pass.

"That's the man who engaged passage for the two women!" whispered Jalakei.

Frank Midgely and the detective at the same instant glanced into each other's faces, and both gave utterance to some startling words.

"That was that infernal Shadow Assassin, Hamud!"

The detective proposed that he should go alone in pursuit of the man, stipulating that his friend might follow, but at a distance great enough not to embarrass his own movements.

Hamud took his line of walk along the shore for some distance, and then struck off in a direct line.

For two miles the detective followed, keeping just near enough to hold the pursued in sight.

At length the white tents of an encampment loomed up on the plain.

The figure in the flowing robes made straight for the tents.

Walton Sprague was brave, but not rashly so, and he knew at once that it would not be safe for him to approach alone the Arab encampment.

He waited for his friends to overtake him.

A few moments' consultation followed.

Tom Jalakei told them that it would be certain robbery, and possibly death, for them to approach the encampment.

The man's advice finally prevailed, and it was agreed that the party should return to the yacht and permit Jalakei to enter the Bedouin encampment upon the following day, in disguise.

On the return toward the beach they met a man advancing toward the encampment.

Jalakei recognized the man as a Jewish trader.

Telling his friends to proceed, he stopped the Jew and asked him some questions.

As Jalakei spoke the language, he had no difficulty in entering into a conversation with the trader.

Upon rejoining our friends, Jalakei exclaimed: "It is lucky for us that we did not go on to the encampment."

In answer to inquiries, he said that the encampment was that of the Sheik Mahmoud, from the district Wady Mandhour, and that he and his tribe were the most lawless robbers anywhere in the whole district.

Upon the following day, Jalakei, dressed in disguise as a native, proceeded to Mahmoud's camp, bearing a letter from a trader in the city who had some dealings with the sheik.

When the man returned, he had important news to tell.

He said that a party was about to move that very day from the encampment, and, from all that he could ascertain, they were to be a special convoy or escort to two females.

The detective visited the American consul, and stated the facts and asked advice.

"I would advise that you organize a party, and meet force with force. The Bedouins are a lawless horde of robbers, and the chances are that, if you depended upon the government, by the time you obtained help, in one sense it would be too late."

The detective was pleased at receiving the advice, and that same night an organized party, well armed, moved toward the sheik's encampment.

For two hours they kept along at a moderate gait, when they came to a belt of country which bordered the dry bed of the stream.

"Here is a good place for us to wait," said Tom Jalakei.

Accordingly they waited until the Bedouins approached within a hundred yards, when they suddenly defiled from the woods, and rode toward them.

The Americans, however, counted without their host, and were suddenly brought to a halt by being met with a volley of musket balls.

Fortunately, but a small part of the Arabs were armed with muskets, or our party would have been pretty well thinned out.

As it was, two of them were but slightly wounded.

As the Arabs fired their muskets, they made a grand charge, intending to cut the party down with their large spears.

"Hold your fire until they are close to us," commanded the detective, whose men had by common instinct fallen into a regular military alignment.

On came the Arabs, shouting like so many dark-faced fiends, when suddenly Sprague exclaimed:

"Now give it to them, boys!"

Twenty carbines belched forth flame, smoke and missiles of death, and half a dozen Bedouin saddles were emptied. The balance turned their horses' heads, and galloped away like the wind.

As they were seen scampering away over the plains, Tom Jalakei exclaimed:

"That's new music for those fellows; they have never encountered anything just like that before."

The detective and Frank Midgely had not stopped to listen to the half-breed Tartar's remark, but the moment the Arabs had turned and fled our two friends galloped toward the point where they had first appeared in view, in the hope of finding the palanquin containing the two females.

In their eagerness they forgot all about their companions, and when at last they came to a halt, were a mile away.

They had lost sight of the Arabs, and could see nothing of the palanquin, as they had anticipated.

They stood alone; not a single object rose in sight above the level of the surrounding plain.

"We will move a short distance in this direction," said the detective, and they were proceeding along at a moderate gait, when Frank pointed to a dark line in the distance.

"We are all right," exclaimed Sprague, "that is the fringe of verdure where we left our friends," and with a cry of delight he urged his horse at a quicker pace.

They galloped for about six hundred yards with their eyes fixed upon the dark outline they had first seen, when suddenly they both came to a halt, and together exclaimed as the truth flashed upon their minds:

"We are wrong!"

The dark outline which they had seen and had taken to be the line of trees, was discovered to be a moving mass of horsemen.

"Now, Frank," exclaimed the detective, "we must trust to our horses for our lives."

Instantly they wheeled about, and put their mettlesome steeds at their best.

They had not miscalculated their chances, as the moment they turned and sped away, the whole band of Arab spearmen started in pursuit.

After galloping for a few moments, they glanced behind them and saw that they had gained on the main body, but about half a dozen Bedouins, who were mounted on extraordinarily fleet horses, were close upon them.

"Some of those fellows are better mounted than we are, Frank!" said Sprague.

"I see they are, and it's all the worse for them I am thinking!"

As Frank spoke, he unslung his carbine from his shoulder.

Immediately his example was followed by the

detective, showing that hot work was about to commence.

CHAPTER XX.

OVER the plain they flew at a tremendous gallop, but their pursuers steadily gained upon them.

At length less than a hundred yards intervened.

"Let's fire together, Walton!" said Frank.

"All right!" was the reply, and both men turned in their saddles, brought their pieces to an aim, and fired.

Two of the Arabs tumbled from their saddles.

The four other horsemen came to a sudden halt when their companions dropped.

"Now, then, we can breathe our animals a bit," said Frank, as he reined in his foaming steed.

The Bedouins were only halted for a few moments by the death of the two companions.

The next moment they came dashing along after the fugitives like American Indians.

Had it been a pursuit only, the chances would have been in favor of Frank Midgely and the detective; but after dashing over the plain for fifteen minutes another band of Arabs was seen in front.

The two fugitives turned in a lateral course, when a third band appeared and commenced galloping toward them.

All three of the pursuing parties, numbering in all over a hundred Bedouins, were closing around the two solitary men.

The last party were the smallest, not numbering more than ten or twelve.

"Frank," said the detective, "there is but one chance for us. We must dash ahead, and cut our way through those brass-faced scoundrels who have appeared last!"

"Go it!" answered Frank, as he held his carbine ready for use, and at the same time adjusted his revolvers so that he could use them as well when his carbine should give out.

Seeing the two men dashing toward them, the Arabs spread in Indian style, so as to prevent them dashing by.

"Now, then, Frank," warned the detective, "give it to them right and left, as we dash amongst them!"

"Ay! ay!" answered Frank, and an instant later both of their repeating carbines were blazing away.

Two or three of the Arabs were tumbled from their horses, and the balance shied away. Day was just breaking, when, after an hour's chase, the Americans turned and saw that the foe had drawn off from the chase.

Our friends, however, rode on, although at a slackened pace, and it was after two hours riding before they thought it safe to dismount and rest.

Both they and their horses needed rest and refreshment.

In the distance they thought they saw a town or village, and they directed their tired horses toward it, knowing that if it was a town, that they were safe, as the Arabs seldom follow even the bitterest foe to an inhabited city.

It was a long ride, and as they approached the spot where they expected to find a thriving city, the truth flashed upon their minds that after all, what they had supposed a city, was only one of those sites of a former city covered over with the ruins of magnificent buildings and temples of former days.

They could find rest and shade at least amid the ruins, so they kept their course.

At length they found a shady nook under a standing wall, and dismounting, turned their animals loose.

"An odd adventure, this, for two Yankees fresh from home," remarked Frank Midgely, with a grim smile.

The detective, however, did not seem to have heard the remark.

True to his instincts, he was making a survey, and after a moment, bidding Frank to remain and watch their animals, he walked away.

The keen man had thought he had discovered signs of human beings having been amidst the ruins at a very recent period, and he set out to follow up the clew.

He followed the trail until he came to a passageway which led seemingly under the ruins of what had once been a large temple.

Here he discovered unmistakable signs of very recent occupation.

Prudence would have suggested that, before entering the cave under the ruins, he had sum-

moned Frank; but, in the eagerness of the moment, he proceeded straight ahead, as though there was no such thing as danger or risk of being killed or captured.

After advancing about fifty feet, he found himself surrounded by an Egyptian darkness.

Suddenly he made a step forward, and as his foot came down he plunged head foremost.

His fall was but a slight one, and he arose uninjured, concluding that he must have fallen down a sort of stairway.

This trifling mishap reminded him that it was necessary to advance more cautiously, as at any moment he might plunge into some unused well or subterranean cavity, so common under the ruins of old buildings.

He had gone but a few feet further, when he was stopped by a solid barrier.

Feeling with his hands, he found that his way had been blocked by a stone wall.

After groping around for a moment, he felt his way along it, and concluded that it was a lateral passage.

He had advanced but a short distance along this latter underground path, when he saw the faint glimmer of a light ahead.

His suspicions were confirmed—he was approaching a spot where human beings were gathered.

A few steps, and he drew near the spot whence the glimmer of light came.

A moment later, and he found himself in a subterranean room.

A lamp was suspended from the ceiling, which, filled with oil, cast a dim radiance around.

Not a living soul did the detective behold, although there were signs of very recent occupation.

Across one end of the strange room was suspended a dingy curtain which had once been a rich crimson damask.

Still governed more by curiosity than prudence, the detective pushed aside the curtain and disclosed another passage.

Coolly stepping back, he took down the suspended lamp, and, using it in place of a torch, started to continue his explorations.

Following the passage through various windings, he finally emerged into a ruined court and stood under the broad light of noonday.

Around him, on every side, rose walls at least twenty feet in height; and crumbling on the ground were portions of stone which had once been part of a circular piazza or gallery.

"A nice old place this for a modern New Yorker!" he remarked, when suddenly his quick ear detected the sound of a human step.

Turning about quickly he caught a passing glimpse of what appeared to be a female figure.

He saw the woman but a moment, when she disappeared as though by magic.

Grasping his revolver so as to be prepared for accident, he hastened toward the spot where he had seen the figure.

When he reached there he saw nothing.

The idea struck him that after all he might have been deceived by a freak of his imagination.

Instantly afterward, however, this suspicion was dispelled as the sound of a human voice broke upon his ears:

He stood and listened.

A moment, and he concluded that it was a female singing in an unknown tongue, and the tones of an instrument informed him that she was accompanying herself possibly with a lute.

"I'll find that singer," he murmured, "if it costs me my life!" and he commenced to search for a passage leading from the court.

He was rewarded in finding the opening to a passage, and this he entered.

He had not proceeded far when he came to a place where a second curtain hung across the passage.

This, he concluded, must be the entrance into the apartment where the fair singer was located. He pushed aside the curtain, and such a scene of rude magnificence met his gaze as caused him to stand transfixed with astonishment and wonder.

Tarnished articles of former great value and gorgeousness lay scattered around in careless confusion; but it was not these that held the detective's glance.

Lying upon lounges, and side carpetings spread upon the floor, were at least twenty females of rare beauty.

They were robed in very *négligé* costumes, and as upon his entrance they rose to their feet and gazed at the intruder with looks of wild terror,

they presented a picture so beautiful and entrancing, as to completely bewilder the beholder.

The truth flashed upon the detective's mind at once.

He had penetrated the harem of the shiek, who most probably ruled over the robber Arab band who inhabited the ruins as their secret lair.

The instant Walton Sprague recovered from his surprise and amazement, he stepped back and let the curtain fall.

At once a series of wild and piercing shrieks arose from within the seraglio.

The detective in the first moment of surprise had dropped his lamp, which had been crushed to atoms at his feet, and upon retreating a few steps he found himself once again enveloped in impenetrable darkness.

He hastened along, supposing that he was retreating toward the opening by which he had entered the passage; suddenly, however, he felt himself flying through space.

After that all was a blank.

When he returned to consciousness he commenced to feel around in order to ascertain where he was, so as to form some idea of the accident he had met with.

Fortunately, an examination of his limbs satisfied him that he was not badly injured, although he knew that he must have fallen and been stunned to unconsciousness.

An investigation revealed the fact that he had tumbled into the area of a dried-out cistern.

Remembering that he had a few lucifers in his pocket, he lighted one and the flame lasted long enough for him to see. To his dismay, he discovered that the walls were at least eighteen feet high, and presented a smooth, slippery surface, covered with slime.

He had just time to see all this, and, glancing hastily at his watch, discover it was past four o'clock, when the match went out again, leaving him in darkness.

He was hungry and burning with thirst.

Round and round he walked in search of a foot or hand hold, but on every side he met the same smooth wall.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOURS passed, and like a wild animal walking to and fro in his cage the detective paced around the dry cistern, here and there thumping against the walls and finding no hole or crevice which would aid him to escape.

Drawing his revolver he discharged it, hoping that the sound would attract some human being to him.

Even the presence of one of his swarthy-faced foes would have been preferable to remaining where he was to die a lingering death.

He discharged at intervals every shot in his revolver.

Thus the moments passed until he became insane with chagrin, and only regretted that he had not retained one charge wherewith to blow out his own brains and terminate his sufferings.

It was in this moment of extreme agony that upon gazing upward he saw the glimmer of a light.

Leaping to his feet with eyes starting from their sockets he watched.

As the light came nearer and nearer, he resolved to wait, hoping even against hope that it might prove to be Frank.

An instant later the ray of light from the lamp flashed directly upon him, and he saw a strangely veiled being peering over the edge of the cistern at him.

A voice asked a question in a strange tongue. The detective replied in English.

He saw the woman move her head negatively, and then, as he had made considerable progress in the study of the French language, he said in that language:

"I am a stranger in distress."

His heart thrilled, when in the same language a sweet voice answered:

"How came you there?"

"I was wandering through the ruins, and fell in here in the darkness."

"Wait," said the veiled woman, "and I will get a rope so that you can ascend."

She disappeared in darkness, while with anxiously beating heart the detective waited.

In a few minutes the light reappeared, and the veiled girl a second time peered over the verge of the cistern.

The end of a rope, made from leather strips, was thrown to him, and his veiled rescuer said:

"You can trust yourself to the rope; it is strong, and securely fastened on this end."

It took the detective but a moment, with the aid of the rope, to climb up and stand beside the girl.

He thanked her warmly for her aid, and asked:

"To whom am I indebted for this great service?"

"I am the wife of the Sheik Hajah."

"Are you a captive?"

"I am; but how came I to find you here?"

"I was exploring the ruins."

"Do you know the risk you ran? Sheik Hajah is a robber chief; this is his abode; had he discovered you you would have been plundered and put to a cruel death; come, every moment is precious, as I can not tell at what moment Hajah and his followers may return."

As the woman concluded, she moved away.

The detective followed.

The girl led the way straight to the courtyard, and as our hero passed from under the dark shadow of the passage, he emerged under the twinkling light of the stars.

Night had fallen, and poor Frank might have been killed, or lost like himself, for all he knew.

The strange rescuer led the detective to the entrance to the passage which led to the main apartment in the ruins where Walton Sprague had first found signs of human habitation.

"I can go no further," she said, "and may Heaven aid you to pass to safety without meeting Hajah."

At the same moment she passed him a small bag which she said contained dates, figs and other fruit.

Walton Sprague seized her hand, and imprinted a kiss upon it before she could prevent him, and taking the offered lamp started into the passage.

As he moved along he ate of the fruit in the bag which the girl had given him, and little dreaming of the danger which awaited him, moved forward with a light heart.

He reached the main cavern, crossed it, and was passing along the passage leading out of the ruins, when suddenly he heard voices and steps in advance of him.

Instinctively he turned to retrace his steps, but stumbled and fell.

In his fall he struck against a crumbling wall, which, with a loud crash, toppled all about him.

He was completely covered by the *débris*, and by the time he could shake himself free and rise to his feet, the men whom he heard were upon him.

It was the first time in his whole life that Walton Sprague had been squarely overcome.

The men did not injure him, although they handled him rather roughly as they led him back to the apartment which they inhabited.

No questions were put to him, which was a matter of surprise; and for many hours he was left to his own sad meditations.

Although securely bound, several of the robbers acted as a guard over him.

Shortly after he was bid to rise, and was led along the passage toward the exit out upon the plain.

Bound as he was, Walton Sprague was placed upon a horse, and two spearmen took a position on either side.

They had asked no questions, and vouchsafed no information concerning their intentions regarding him, and he practiced the same reticence.

The party traveled until toward noon, when they struck into a ravine, which was the entrance of a path between a number of hills, toward which they were traveling.

Suddenly the report of several fire-arms was heard, and two or three of the Arabs keeled from their saddles.

Bullets were now flying thick and fast, and in the confusion and alarm of the moment, the Bedouins were more intent upon escape with their own lives, than concern for their prisoner, and the detective speedily found himself riding alone.

A moment later he heard a loud shout as he galloped in the midst of his friends.

Tom Jalakei was the first to rush to his side and cut the thongs by which he was bound.

The first question Walton Sprague asked was, "Is Frank Midgely with you?"

His heart sunk when he received the reply that Frank had not been seen since the skirmish on the previous night.

Tom Jalakei, who had taken command of the party since the absence of the detective, stated

that since the disappearance of their friends, they had been scouring the plains in every direction in search of them; and that while acting as scout on his own hook, he had discovered the band who held the detective prisoner, and had arranged to surprise them and rescue him in the manner in which the rescue had been made.

The Turco-European led the party to a place where they found a spring whereat to quench their thirst; a meal also was provided, and the whole party set in motion to go toward the ruins to find their still missing companion.

In the meantime Frank Midgely was enjoying a number of startling adventures on his own account. At the time the detective had left him, he had waited for him to return, anticipating that at most his friend would not be gone more than half an hour.

The half hour passed, and hours also, and the detective was still absent.

The young man at length concluded to go in search of his friend, but before doing so cast about for a good place to picket the horses.

In hunting around he came to an archway, and leading the two animals forward he was walking along when he thought he heard the sound of rippling waters.

He soon discovered a spring of water.

The two horses were led to drink, and the youth gladly quenched his own thirst.

Subsequently he picketed the two animals and started to look for his friend.

He continued the search until near nightfall, when, just as he was about to give up in despair, he discovered the entrance to the same passage-way which the detective had entered. Knowing his friend's investigating propensities, our hero concluded at once that Walton Sprague had entered the passage-way and had most likely lost his way.

Making up his mind to be careful, and guard his retreat, Frank entered.

He had proceeded but a short distance when he fancied he heard steps.

He was just upon the point of shouting, when he heard voices, and upon turning saw that a number of men were tramping behind him.

At the same moment, as he went feeling along, he discovered a lateral passage, and, to escape the party coming in his rear, he turned aside.

Here he lay crouched until the party passed.

When their footsteps had died away he came out again into the main passage, and considered what he should do.

He resolved to follow in the same direction taken by the men, determined to be near and assist his friend, and in case of being unable to rescue him, at least to die with him.

Moving along cautiously, he actually proceeded to the entrance of the robber den, and from a selected hiding-place surveyed them.

He saw nothing of his friend, and concluded that Walton Sprague, after all, had not entered the ruins.

Good judgment suggested that he should beat a retreat, but when he gained the entrance leading into the passage, he found it guarded by the Bedouins.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE party whom Frank Midgely found at the entrance of the passage were the same who had been left in charge of the horses and traveling paraphernalia of the robber chief.

Did he not fear endangering the life of his friend, he would have taken the chances of running the gantlet of these men; but, as it was, he decided to adopt a more cautious plan.

After wandering around for some time, he became wearied, and sat down amidst the darkness to rest and think over his chances.

He soon fell asleep, and being greatly exhausted, profoundly slumbered for a number of hours.

When he finally awoke, it seemed to him as though it were still night, and he believed that he had only slept for a few moments.

Feeling considerably rested, he resumed his gropings about to find some mode of egress.

After wandering around for a long time, he saw a streak of light, and at once he made for it.

As he drew nearer, he recognized the fact that it was really sunlight.

As luck would have it, he emerged by another passage out into the same courtyard in which the detective had first caught a glimpse of the female figure.

He was proceeding to cross the ruins of what had once been a magnificent court filled with fountains and statues, when he was suddenly

confronted by two dark-faced, fierce-looking men.

The two Bedouins leaped toward the young New Yorker to seize him, when the latter sprang back, and drawing his pistol, leveled it, and brought both the fellows to a sudden halt.

The two Arabs made numerous signs, and blurted out a lot of gibberish, which was all Hebrew to our careless young hero.

Unslung his repeating carbine, Frank stuck his revolver in his holster belt, and then, by very significant motions, intimated to the two bewildered Bedouins that he wanted them to retreat.

The men obeyed, but, after moving for a short distance, both suddenly turned, and fled out of sight, with the quickness of a cat scaling a fence.

The fellows disappeared through a passage, which opened from the court, on the opposite side.

Our hero started to follow them, but proceeded slowly, lest he might run into some trap.

It was well that he did, as in a few seconds half a dozen of the Bedouins came hurrying through the passage exit, and three of them were armed with long rifles.

The two Arabs raised their rifles, but before they could fire, the young New Yorker had dodged behind a crumbling monument.

One bullet, however, whistled over his head, just as he dodged down.

It was his turn, and, leveling his carbine over the top of his barrier, he let drive, bang! bang! bang! three shots in quick succession.

None of his discharges proved effective, beyond driving the Arabs back pell-mell into the passage-way, out of range.

The moment the Bedouins beat a retreat, Frank concluded that, as they had run one way, it would be a wise thing for him to run the other, as he had no re-enforcements to fall back on, while his strange foes might, in a few moments, number hundreds.

He dodged into the passage opposite to which he found himself, and proceeded along until he came to the very same curtain which the detective had rudely pulled aside some hours previously.

Unlike his friend, however, he did not retreat, but, on the contrary, stepped boldly into the apartment.

He calculated that there must be some near passage leading out from the ruins, and as his life was threatened, it was not a moment to stand on nice points of etiquette.

As he first stepped into the lavishly furnished room, the fifteen or twenty lovely women were too greatly terrified to scream; but in a moment they recovered their voices, and set up a shrill screeching that made our astonished hero's ears tingle.

In a few seconds they had all fled, and Frank found himself alone in this home of rude Eastern loveliness.

He commenced to skirmish around for some mode of egress other than the one by which he had entered that hall of enchantment.

No passage leading from the apartment presented itself.

Overhead was a sort of wickered dome, lined on the inner side with some sort of colored cloth, from which light descended into the room; but there was no passage that he could discover, save the one by which he had entered, and through which the terrified occupants of the room had escaped.

The youth could not leave by that way, as he would most likely be met by a hundred assassins.

He still hoped to find some mode of getting out, when a very startling and at the same time ludicrous accident befell him.

His eyes were roving round in search of the coveted passage, and at the same time he kept moving round, when suddenly he stumbled against and fell over a divan.

He was greeted by a scream, and a veiled woman leaped to her feet and confronted him.

"How came you here?" came the question, in a voice of exquisite sweetness.

The query was put in French, and with a cry of delight Frank answered:

"I became lost in these ruins, and have been unable to find my way out."

"You must not die. I will try to save you at the risk of my own life."

"You must not run any risk for me."

"Follow me; there are many places of concealment in these vast ruins, and an opportunity may offer to guide you safely beyond them."

His veiled rescuer seized a lamp, and led him

to a part of the room whence a crimson arras depended from the ceiling.

She drew this aside, and motioned for Frank to pass through.

Frank discovered that he was being led through many winding passages.

At length his veiled rescuer came to a halt, and said:

"You can remain here until an opportunity offers to lead you beyond the ruins. I must return, or my own life will answer for the aid I have rendered you."

The girl had displayed more thoughtfulness by providing herself with a bag of fruit, which she gave to our hero.

Some two hours passed as near as he could calculate, when the darkness by which he had been surrounded was relieved by a glimmer of light.

A moment later the fair woman who had conducted him to the place of concealment, appeared.

"I will lead you forth," she said, "but I fear that you will lose your life!"

"Lead me forth and I will take the chances."

"Yes: it is safer to pass you beyond the ruins, as every nook, corner and crevice will be explored. Hajah has returned, and anger rests upon his brow; he is cruel and brave, and will spare not."

In answer to her questions Frank told her, as near as he could indicate, by what entrance he had passed within the ruins, and where he had left his horse and accouterments.

"You could not have left them in a safer place," said the girl. "No Mohammedan would venture near that spring; they would die of thirst rather."

"And will you tell me why?"

"I can not tell you, but there is some superstition connected with its waters which causes them to remain away from the vicinity of the spring altogether."

At length the girl came to a halt, and, pointing to a passage-way, said:

"Follow that, and it will lead you beyond to the plain; but I fear death awaits you without. But it is your only chance, as you would certainly be discovered anywhere within the ruins."

Frank would have renewed his thanks, but the strange conductress was singularly averse to hearing one word.

"No!" she said, "do not tarry a moment; you imperil both our lives."

At the same moment Frank heard the sound of approaching steps.

"Oh, mercy!" exclaimed the girl, "we are even now discovered!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE veiled woman was seized with a fit of trembling.

Frank caught hold of her arm, saying:

"Fear not; I will protect you."

"Fly! fly! In that manner alone can you relieve me from danger!"

Frank was loath to leave the girl who had run so great a risk for him, but an instant's consideration convinced him that she spoke truly; his flight alone would relieve her from danger, and he dashed through the passage.

The girl had told him to keep straight ahead, but in the confusion of the moment, passing a wider passage through which a glimmer of daylight shone, he turned and followed it.

A few moments reminded him of his error.

The passage terminated in a crumbling gallery, which overlooked an inclosure, surrounded on every side by high walls.

He started to retrace his steps, when the sound of several footsteps fell upon his ear.

He had been tracked and followed.

At the same moment he heard a scream of terror.

A glimmer of day shone in the passage, sufficient to reveal, indistinctly, several surrounding objects.

At the end of the passage were four Bedouins. Kneeling in their midst was the woman who had aided him.

A large handkerchief was bound around her head, and gathered in a twisted knot around her delicate throat.

The poor victim had ceased to struggle, when, with the quickness of thought, Frank leveled his revolver and fired.

The assassin fell, pierced through the brain.

The girl fell, face forward, while the three other Bedouins, with their spears raised, dashed at Frank.

The youth fell back, but kept blazing away with his revolver.

A second of the Bedouins fell, but the other two pressed closely upon him, and one of them managed to wound our hero in the shoulder slightly.

The last charge was fired, and one of the Bedouins remained.

Frank did not have time to unsling his carbine, before the fellow was close upon him.

A desperate struggle followed.

Short and terrible was the conflict, and in the end poor Frank was borne to the ground.

The Bedouin's hands were upon his throat, and in a moment all would have been over for him, when, by a mighty effort, he managed to get his hand under him and secure his knife.

This advantage he improved, and in an instant the fourth assassin rolled over upon the floor of the passage, writhing in the agonies of death.

Frank's wound was but a slight one, and in a moment he was upon his feet.

He calculated that a few moments might bring a dozen more of the swarthy assassins, but that did not deter him from hastening to the assistance of the fair girl who had acted as his conductress.

Tearing the handkerchief from around her head, he found that she was conscious.

"You are saved!" he said.

In tearing off the handkerchief, Frank had torn aside the veil also, which hitherto had hidden the girl's features.

With a beating heart he recognized that she was transcendently beautiful.

Frank caught her by the hand, and in piteous tones besought her to fly with him, promising her safety and protection.

"I would but entail perils about you," said the girl, "even if we should escape temporarily."

"Listen; I have a vessel in the harbor of Jaffa which belongs to me. Once on board, and you are safe; and when my mission in this dreadful country is accomplished, I will take you to a land where women are revered and respected, and not honored with less veneration than one bestows upon a good horse, as is the case among these plunderers of the desert."

"I will go with thee," said the girl, as a bright expression came upon her lovely face.

Frank felt that he might remotely be doing this girl a wrong, and his honest nature prompted him to say:

"I owe you my life, and that gives me the right to be a brother to you; but I must tell thee my heart is already pledged to a maiden of my own race."

The bright expression faded not from Zillah's charming face, as she sweetly said:

"'Tis enough that thou perdest me to become thy sister."

"Listen; you shall be as dear and precious to me as though my mother had been thine. Come, we are in danger here."

"I had forgotten," said the girl, adding: "Follow me."

It was late in the afternoon when they emerged from the passage, upon the scattered debris which lay upon the open plain about the ruins.

"Lead the way to the fountain," said Frank.

The girl, who had resumed her veil, led the way along the edge of the ruin, when suddenly a shout was heard, and at least a dozen Arabs appeared rushing toward them.

"Let us fly," said Zillah.

"How far are we from the haunted well?" asked Frank.

"Not more than a hundred yards."

"Well, if we can only reach that, and once mount my horses, we are all right."

They commenced to dodge from stone to stone, moving toward the haunted well, when they were attracted by hearing a shout of exultation.

Looking across the plain, the cause of the exultation was discovered.

Far in the distance appeared a band of horsemen.

As Zillah's eye fell upon the cavalcade, she exclaimed:

"We are undone! It is Hajah and his band!"

"Courage, my brave girl; we have not escaped them thus far to make it a losing game at the end."

"I know you are brave, and might hold a dozen at bay; but Hajah has fifty spearmen under his command, and he is a brave man, who can not be driven back, and under his lead-

ership his men would advance under a perfect shower of death."

"With life there is hope!" said Frank, and the next moment he joyfully exclaimed: "Courage, girl, behold, there come our rescuers!"

The girl looked in the direction indicated.

She saw a second band of horsemen.

Even in the distance, Frank had recognized them as his friends, and Zillah, at a glance, saw that they were other than Arabs.

"They are your friends?" she said.

"Yes."

Hajah and his men were bearing down close upon them.

Frank leveled his carbine.

All depended upon the sureness of his aim.

The report broke the stillness, the smoke cleared away, and Hajah was still riding bravely at the head of his fierce followers.

Frank felt a chill at his heart, and a pallor overspread his face, as with his weapon still leveled he fired again.

Hajah tumbled from his horse, and the whole band was thrown into confusion.

"Come!" cried Frank.

The fugitives ran across the open space, and gained the haunted well.

The two horses, restive and snorting with impatience, were still picketed where Frank had fastened them.

The American assisted Zillah to mount one of the horses, when he leaped upon the same animal and an instant later was galloping toward his friends.

The Bedouins saw him, and a number started in hot pursuit, but they were too late.

The fugitives' friends had approached nigh enough to take in the situation.

Half a dozen carbines belched forth.

The Bedouins were checked in their pursuit, and Frank galloped unpursued toward his friends.

A moment later, and he was among them.

Walton Sprague rode forward to meet him, when Tom Jalakei exclaimed:

"We must away to the hills on the open plain; the Bedouins will soon swarm around us."

Even as he spoke a band of horsemen numbering many hundreds, appeared in sight.

The Turco European pointed to the newcomers with the exclamation:

"In the hills we will have our only chance."

The band of Americans turned their horses and urged them at the top of their speed.

The wisdom of the journey to the hills was speedily proved, as the whole plain soon became as it were alive with spearmen.

"By George!" exclaimed Tom, the river pirate, "we have become engaged in a big war on our own account."

The leaders of the party did not feel like joking, their adventure was assuming formidable proportions.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WALTON SPRAGUE, when he had recovered somewhat after having been rescued by his friends, had at once proposed that they should hasten to the ruins in search of Frank.

His promptness saved his friend's life, as only five minutes' delay would have left him in the power of his enemies past all hope.

It was night when the party, after a hard gallop, reached the hills.

The horses were driven to a hollow where they were protected by rising rocks, which formed a sort of natural basin or walled stable-yard.

The men were posted at different points behind such barricades as could be found, where all hands awaited the approach of the foe.

"They will not run into your trap, Tom," said the detective, after all the arrangements had been completed.

"Yes, they will."

"What makes you think so?"

"They are in great numbers," said Jalakei, "and they know that we have been fleeing from them; they calculate that we are making for the coast, and do not suspect for a moment that we will make a stand."

The conversation was cut short by the report of a gun.

The Bedouins had approached the point of the bluffs, where the Americans were concealed, and a large proportion of them were passing down on either side.

They could not have adopted a more fatal plan for themselves.

Both sides of the bluff soon became, as it were, a burning sheet of flame, from which death poured in amongst them.

The confusion which followed was simply terrible.

The whole mass of Bedouins had become wedged, as it were, in such an inextricable confusion, that they could not retreat, while death was pouring down upon them from the sides of the bluff.

For full ten minutes this terrible scene ensued, before the wild, despairing children of the desert could get beyond the range of fire.

The slaughter was at length over, and silence reigned where, but a few moments before, such a fearful din had prevailed.

Two hours passed, during which time, under the direction of Tom Jalakei, the horses had been fed.

The men also partook of refreshments, when all hands mounted, and the march to the coast was commenced.

Tom Jalakei acted as guide, and, shortly after midnight, they emerged from among the hills, and, by a direct road, were on their way to the coast.

Walton Sprague rode beside Tom Jalakei, and, for the first time, observed a man bound to a horse.

"Whom have you here?" asked the detective.

"My prisoner."

"What do you want of a prisoner?"

"I will tell you, if we ever get on board of the yacht, and I succeed in making that son of the desert open his lips."

Just before daylight the party reached the coast.

All hands were dismounted, when Tom Jalakei directed that Tom, the river pirate, and Curly, the sailor, should accompany him to the city of Jaffa.

The Turco-European knew that, even in Jaffa, the party would not be safe, after what had occurred.

He held a few moments' conversation with Frank and the detective, and then departed, taking the horses with him, after the manner of a prairie drover.

Toward ten o'clock of the forenoon of the same day, one of the party, who had been wandering some distance away, returned with the news that a large party of Bedouins were approaching.

At the same moment that this information was conveyed, Walton Sprague, glancing seaward, exclaimed:

"Let them come! They are a little too late!"

In the distance he had espied the yacht scudding in toward the shore.

In less than five minutes the vessel was brought to anchor, three or four boats were lowered, and at the very instant that a large force of Arabs were seen coming over a distant sand-hill, the American party were ascending the side of the yacht.

Both Walton Sprague and Frank Midgely felt exceedingly sad.

Neither believed but that already the girls had fallen victims to their brown-faced captors.

Had they confided their fears to Tom Jalakei, that individual would have informed them that there was every reason to hope to the contrary.

He understood the habits of the Arabs better, and knew that such rare beauties as the two girls, would bring almost fabulous prices, and that their rescue might yet be made with every reason to hope for the best.

Walton Sprague had been introduced to the lovely Zillah.

He recognized her as the veiled rescuer who had been of such service to him, when lost amidst the ruins.

Tom Jalakei was also introduced to the lovely girl.

As our readers will recollect, the Turco-European had captured a prisoner.

The latter proved to be an individual of considerable importance.

During the trip to Beyroot, Tom had used every effort to try and induce the Arab to answer certain questions.

The man was as silent and stoical as an old-time Massachusetts Indian.

On the evening following the morning of their raising anchor to sail to Beyroot, Tom had the Arab taken to the cabin, and requested to be left alone with the fellow.

An hour passed; and, when the cunning fellow came on deck, a pleased smile rested upon his face.

It chanced that the first persons he met were the detective and Frank, who were standing

near the quarter-rail, discussing the situation, in a very gloomy mood.

"You look pleased, Tom!" exclaimed Frank.

"Yes, I am pleased."

"What has occurred to delight you?"

"I have taught my Arab to speak."

"Well, did he abuse you?"

"No; but he furnished me with certain information."

"Concerning Hamud?"

"Yes."

The detective and Frank were at once greatly interested.

Walton Sprague asked:

"Is he acquainted with Hamud's designs?"

"To a certain extent, yes. Hamud is a Persian—a Ujak—and he is far on his way to Persia, bearing his prisoners with him. He has played a cunning game, and has thrown us completely off the track, but I guess we can come up even with him yet."

"What is a Ujak?" asked the detective.

"A Ujak is a sort of hereditary prince or chief; the ruler or grand sheik of a clan. He has absolute control over his subjects, himself being subject to the Shah only."

"Then there is no hope for us," said Sprague.

"Oh, yes, there is hope; but I have some curious news to tell you concerning an incident which occurred in New York."

Both men were intensely interested as Jalakei explained that Hamud had gone to New York in quest of revenge.

But Frank Midgely could not have been the object of his revenge, although he was the victim of his murderous weapon.

"Was Mr. Frank Midgely ever a traveler in Syria?" asked Tom.

"Never," answered Frank.

"Then you are the victim of mistaken identity."

This statement filled the two Americans with amazement, but the mystery was explained when Jalakei proceeded and said:

"Two years ago, a traveler in Persia met and fell in love with Hamud's favorite wife. You know," continued the Turco-European, "that is a straight way of putting it, but the real story is that by accident the traveler, who must have been a young man, saw the face of one of the inmates of Hamud's house. The young stranger fell in love with the Persian beauty, and at once set about making the lovely incognita's acquaintance. He must have been a bold, fascinating chap, as he succeeded not only in communicating with the beautiful houri, but he managed also to gain her love, and, with the connivance of an eunuch, planned an elopement. On the night when the elopement was attempted the elopers were discovered. A fracas ensued, during which the beautiful innocent cause of all the trouble was killed, while the young man who had tempted her made his escape."

"Hamud made diligent efforts to discover him, but failed. Then he took an oath that he would follow the man to the ends of the earth and slay him."

"A search was at once made for the bold invader of Hamud's home. A photograph was found revealing the young man's identity, and subsequent information disclosed the fact that he was an American and a native of New York."

"Hamud at once set out for New York, and after many months' weary search, one day met the original of the photograph in the street."

"He followed his enemy, and attempted his life, and supposing that he had killed his foe, to more fully carry out his revenge, he attempted to kill the young lady who was in company with the original of the photograph."

Frank looked puzzled, and then an expression of anger began to settle upon his handsome face.

"Do you mean to say that my life was attempted through a resemblance, and that this fatal resemblance is the cause of all my present misfortune?"

The detective said:

"Frank, can you give any other explanation for Hamud's strange enmity toward you?"

Further explanation sustained all that Tom had said, and both the detective and Frank were finally forced to the conclusion that strange, wonderful, and improbable as the whole matter was, that after all the true cause of Hamud's mysterious and bitter, and almost fatal enmity, had been discovered.

The yacht finally anchored in the harbor of Beyroot, when Tom Jalakei explained the plan he had formed.

"I will secure a couple or more of Tartar

Turks, I will assume the rôle of a Bedouin, and you and Mr. Sprague must assume the rôle of French travelers."

"The latter is easily done."

"I know, and I and the Tartars will act as your guide. We must carry our lives in our hands, and trust to circumstances, and I think that we may yet succeed in rescuing the girls inviolate. I have reason to hope concerning the latter from facts which it is not necessary to make known."

CHAPTER XXV.

TOM JALAKEI proved himself to be a man of great shrewdness, while the detective also displayed equal cunning.

The disguises were adopted, and when Frank Midgely, Walton Sprague, and an escort of natives, under the command of Tom Jalakei, set out for the Empire of Persia, it would not have been possible for the nearest friend of the two seeming French gentlemen to have penetrated their disguise.

It was on the third day of their journey that they encountered their first adventure.

They had been traveling for twelve hours without drink for themselves and horses, when toward evening they came in sight of the foothills of some distant mountains.

At the same moment they espied a body of horsemen approaching.

The Bedouins had discovered our party of travelers, and were evidently coming openly to communicate with them.

Tom Jalakei understood French, and in order to deceive the escort he had secured, he always addressed Sprague and Frank in that language.

As he saw the horsemen, and realized that they were coming to communicate, he said:

"Now, then, we must be exceedingly wary; remember that seemingly I become your enemy, but under no circumstance must you ever have the least fear. I would die a thousand deaths before I would be false to you in any way."

Both the Americans assured him that they so believed.

"You will have to do your talking with those roving plunderers through me, and you may see me hobnobbing with them, but, as I said before, remember that all I do is in your own interest. I must be an Arab now."

The party of horsemen soon drew near.

They were very courteous in their address to our travelers, and invited them to visit their camp.

A sign from Tom Jalakei caused the Americans to decline this proffered hospitality, which was not urged.

Through the interpreter the detective inquired how far they would have to travel before they found water.

The information was cautiously given, and after having received a few presents, the sheik, followed by the rest of his men, rode off.

The Americans rode on for some time in silence, which was at length broken by Tom Jalakei, who said:

"Nice fellows, you think?"

"Yes, they are," said Walton Sprague.

"You won't think them so nice an hour after sundown," was the significant suggestion.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I mean that each one of that gang has had his eye on the particular piece of booty which he most covets, and we will be called upon to exchange shots with those fellows before we are many hours older."

"Then we will have thousands of them after us, as it was at Jaffa."

"Not a bit of it. We were attacked upon that occasion with a purpose. These are only ordinary robbers. We may beat them off a dozen times in twenty-four hours, and it will make no difference. There was another reason for those tribes to make common cause against us, and Hamud, the Persian, was at the bottom of the whole matter."

The travelers reached the hills and found water, and as it was just about sundown Tom Jalakei selected a good place and determined to camp for the night.

"Will you put one of your men on guard?" asked the detective.

"No; I will stand guard myself, and if you are aroused during the night, do not be alarmed. These fellows, when only after plunder, are easily driven off."

The Americans were very tired after their long day's ride, and shortly after supper they spread their blankets under the shelter tents, and lay down to sleep.

They did not know until afterward how long they had slept, when they were aroused by the discharge of a fire-arm.

Both men were on their feet in an instant, and, weapon in hand, rushed out.

They were just in time.

Seven or eight Bedouins had surrounded Tom Jalakei, and in a few moments the faithful fellow would have been dispatched.

Both aimed and fired, when, with a shout, the robbers wheeled their horses and galloped away.

Tom, however, was nowhere to be seen.

Daylight dawned, and still Tom did not put in an appearance; but a suspicious circumstance was revealed.

His horse was gone, and also the horses of the Americans.

"We are in a bad plight now," said Frank.

"We will go on, anyhow, and trust to making a purchase of horses from some of these wandering thieves."

It was with sad hearts that our two friends commenced to pack their tents and cooking utensils, when they heard the tramp of horses.

Upon looking around, they saw Tom Jalakei, and the balance of their escort, approaching.

The first opportunity that offered, Walton Sprague asked:

"Where were you?"

"I have been proving my men."

"And what is the verdict?"

"We can depend upon them. The arrangements which I have made with them, to be fulfilled after our return to Beyroot, will keep them true as steel."

"Where were they during the skirmish last night?"

"Fulfilling my orders. They are all right; and the reception you gave those chaps last night will cause them to give us a wide berth. Our next skirmish will be with a fresh lot."

CHAPTER XXVI.

WITH adventures of almost daily occurrence, like the one we have described, our party pursued their journey, and, at length, entered Persian territory, without meeting with any real loss.

It was in the morning when they crossed the Persian border, and, toward dusk, they approached a Persian town, where they had decided to remain overnight.

There was no danger now of robbery, as the settled inhabitants of the towns are not, as a rule, given to plunder, but are industrious and hospitable people.

Frank and Walton Sprague were surprised at the style of the houses in the towns.

They had heard so much of Persian magnificence and luxury, that they had expected to find buildings constructed of something else besides mud, and, at least, more than one story high.

Although the exteriors present such a shabby appearance, when one enters the houses of the rich, he discovers whence come all these stories of Persian magnificence.

Furniture of the most splendid and massive manufacture; hangings the most gorgeous; and carpets of such elegance that their reputation has become world-wide.

The people of Persia are, also, as contrastive in their characters as are the interiors and exteriors of their residences.

They are the most polite of all Oriental nations, and surpass all others in the skillful and profuse manner in which they administer flattery.

They employ, in conversation, the most extravagantly hyperbolic language. Dissimulation is carried, by them, to the highest pitch.

Lying is never scrupled at, and their whole conduct is a train of fraud and deceit.

Morality is much studied, though little practiced.

They are a handsome race, and, during all ages, have been the most relentless dealers in slaves; and Persia has always been an excellent market for the sale of beautiful women, stolen from their homes in the villages of Circassia and Georgia.

Tom Jalakei commenced making inquiries concerning the abode of the mysterious Hamud.

He knew that his task was an almost hopeless one, and yet he felt that there might exist one chance in his favor.

It so proved, as he met, at one of the coffee bazaars, an adventurous Turcoman, who had once been in Hamud's service.

From this man he ascertained that the Ujak, Hamud, resided near the capital of Persia, the famous city of Teheran.

Our travelers had crossed Arabia, and had passed in safety that country where the strong arm of the law is an unknown element in society.

They were now in Persia, where a show of government is made, and where law is supposed to exist; and yet the perils of their journey were none the less, as even a worse class of bandits infest the roads and mountain passes in Persia, than are to be found even among the roving bands of Arabia.

Upon the day following the arrival in Persian territory, after a good night's rest, our travelers set out for Teheran, and after many adventures and numerous hair-breadth escapes, arrived in sight of that famous city of the East.

Had Walton Sprague and Frank Midgely been less worried concerning the fate of the two lovely girls they had come to rescue, they would have enjoyed their journey immensely, as both were fond of excitement and adventure.

Teheran is situated at the foot of the lofty Elburz mountains.

In summer it is an unhealthy place to reside, and is deserted by the majority of its inhabitants, who, with the Shah and his body-guard, encamp on the plains of Sultania. The city is four miles in circumference, and resembles in some respects more a fortified camp than a capital city of a great empire.

The houses are all built of mud, or sun-dried brick, and the whole city is surrounded by a mud wall twenty feet high.

Our travelers only remained one day in Teheran, when they proceeded beyond it.

On their road they passed through the ruins of Rhages, a place well-known through sacred historians as the place where the Israelites were taken after the Babylonian captivity.

It was in the evening when they encamped amidst these ruins.

They had just finished their supper when a man of bended form, with silver-white hair and beard, appeared at the opening to their tent.

The old fellow was one of those famous storytellers of the East, and he had come to entertain our company in hopes of receiving a few small coins.

Walton Sprague and Frank, not understanding the language, were not interested, of course, in his recitals, but were greatly amused in watching his strange manners and gestures.

Tom Jalakei, however, was greatly interested, and after rewarding the old man bountifully, sent him off.

He then communicated to his employers that he had strange news for them.

The news consisted in the fact that the wily Turco-European had learned from the old storyteller that there was a girl of European birth confined as a prisoner at a house not more than a mile distant from where they were encamped.

This news filled our friends with great excitement, and they were ready to start right off and investigate the matter at once.

Tom informed them, however, that such a proceeding would be fatal to their whole project.

"What we must do," he said, "is to first make sure that the old storyteller's statement is true; and then, in the most cautious manner, we must communicate with the fair captive."

"But we can demand her! We can go and apply to either the Russian or English embassy!" exclaimed Frank.

"Yes, you can apply, but that is all it will amount to; the ambassadors are not going to interfere in any such matter. We must depend upon ourselves for all information, and again depend upon ourselves for rescuing the captive in case she may prove to be the one we seek—the first false step would cost us all our lives."

Jalakei had shown so much cunning and good judgment all along, that the two Americans were not disposed to do anything contrary to his advice.

That same evening quite a number visited their camp to gaze at them, as rustics in our own land frequently gather around the encampment of a band of gypsies.

Upon the following morning Tom said, addressing Walton Sprague:

"I must now depend a great deal upon you; you are a trained detective, and it is detective's work that we must now undertake. I have a plan, and if we carry it out, we may be able to discover something."

"What is your plan?"

"We will resume our march in the ordinary manner, making it appear that we are about to

resume our journey; when we are some miles beyond, you and I will return alone secretly, and see what we can discover."

Frank protested against this plan, as he wished to be with the party; but Tom, knowing his rashness, insisted that the affair must be undertaken by himself and the detective alone.

Frank was compelled to accede, and the party resumed the march.

About noon they came to a halt, when Tom and the detective returned on foot.

The residence which they were to shadow, belonged to a wealthy Persian merchant who did business in the city, and who returned to his home usually every evening, except upon some occasions, when he remained to attend some *fête* at the palace of the Shah.

His house, like all the houses thereabouts, was built of mud and sun-dried brick.

The structure covered a great deal of ground. In fact, it was a number of buildings connected within one inclosure, with numerous courts, gardens, and passages, or lanes.

A mud wall surrounded the building on every side, and there was but one entrance, opposite what appeared to be the main building.

As stated, the detective and Tom Jalakei returned on foot, and so timed themselves as to reach the house about dark, without having attracted any attention.

It was a lovely evening, with the promise of a clear, full moon.

The two men passed around the inclosure several times, and at length Tom Jalakei said, pointing to one of the buildings:

"Those walls inclose the captive, if there be one in that inclosure."

CHAPTER XXVII.

HAVING selected the building they were to shadow, the two men retired to a safe distance and waited until nightfall, determined to pursue their adventure under the moonlight.

Tom told his companion that the chances were that the women of the harem would come out under the moonlight, and gather about the fountain, which he had discovered played in the center of the court-yard which faced the building he had selected as the special abode of the women of the household.

It was nine o'clock when our friends a second time approached the walls.

They had provided themselves for the emergency by bringing with them a rope with hooks attached, to use in scaling the inclosure.

Tom had learned another fact favorable to their enterprise.

There was to be a *fête* in Teheran that night. The chances were that the lord of the mud manor would not return.

As Tom stated this fact, he added with a quiet laugh:

"If things work to our satisfaction he will find the consumers of his dates less by one when he returns to morrow evening."

The building which Jalakei had selected stood within the very center of the inclosure, and instead of being one building, was a curious structure, comprising a number of separate little shanties and one grand, umbrella-shaped roof.

The detective and Tom Jalakei stole up under the walls, and throwing their hooked rope, secured a fastening, and one after the other ascended.

It was, hence, an easy matter to let themselves down into the Persian merchant's grounds.

The trespassers had taken the precaution to clothe their feet in Indian moccasins, and they were enabled to move with the noiseless tread of a cat.

Tom Jalakei appeared to know the way through the labyrinthian paths of the garden, as perfectly as though he had trod them from childhood.

At length, stealing noiselessly along, they came to a spot from whence they heard the sound of falling waters, and, at the same moment, a strange, soft music stole through the trees, different from any the detective had ever heard before.

Tom came to a halt, and whispered, as his eyes snapped with delight:

"We shall catch them all in a covey, like a flock of quails on an Illinois prairie; but we must move very carefully. To be discovered here would bring an army of blacks after us, with their cimeters and spears."

The detective was at home, when engaged in just such work as now employed his wits, and, dropping upon his belly, he motioned Tom to follow his example.

The garden was rich with profusion of trees and flowers.

No expense had been spared by the owner to make it as magnificent with foliage as possible.

Fortunately, one of the few streams to be found in this commonly arid and desert country, flowed down from the mountains near by, and, by conduits, had been canaled to the Persian's garden, to supply his fountain and his flower-beds.

The two men moved noiselessly along, until they reached the verge of an opening, and the sound of falling water became more distinct, while, mingled with the water's murmur and the music, there fell upon their ears the sound of merry voices and pleasant laughter.

A strange thrill stole over the detective's senses.

He felt as though he were intruding in the midst of an earthly Paradise.

He had often read of the hours of Persia and other Oriental lands, and here he was right within the sacred precincts of one of those world-famed harems, which, from the mystery surrounding them, have always been subjects of wondering curiosity.

More slowly they advanced, until they reached a point from whence, through an opening in the hedge of brush, the bewildering scene burst upon their view.

At least twenty beautiful women were in sight, lying around in groups, in true Oriental style.

They were all veiled, but, under the bright, clear moonlight, their bewitching forms were revealed as plainly as though it were noonday.

Ever and anon one or the other of the lovely captives would draw the thin gauze veils partly aside, and their ravishingly beautiful faces were revealed.

Some were lying upon scarlet-colored divans; others reclined upon squares of gorgeous carpet laid upon the ground; while a few were standing around the marble fountain, playing with the silvery spray as it fell in cooling showers.

The detective for a moment was too entranced by the scene to remember the purpose which had led him to invade those sacred homes devoted to beauty, but he was recalled to business by a question from his companion, spoken in a low whisper:

"Do you see a form among them which would answer for a girl born in Europe?"

"Hist!" warned the detective. "I am looking."

"I see you are," muttered Tom, in a tone of peculiar significance.

The detective had recovered from his first bewildering surprise and delight, and scanned each female form with the critical eye of one capable of judging from any slight indices.

He felt a disappointment when the consciousness crept over him that the girl he had come to find was not among the number of those beauties before him.

At length he said:

"I fear we have lost time, Tom, and that we have been led on a fool's errand."

"She may be in the house," said Tom.

"I should judge not. A captive would be sad enough to come forth and try to drown her sadness amidst that scene of enchantment."

"I am going to try a dangerous experiment," said Tom, "so be prepared for hot work."

"What are you about to do?"

"I am going to play bird."

"I do not understand you."

"Well, I am going to imitate the notes of a bird."

"What for—to get us into trouble?"

"No; but to bring the captive out into the garden."

"What nonsense! Do you suppose that the notes of a bird would be likely to attract her outside? On the contrary, you may betray us."

"We must run that risk. There is no use in our leaving here without making sure, and we must take some chances."

"But that is such a foolish expedient. Why should the notes of a singing bird draw the girl forth?"

"Watch, wait and listen," said Tom.

The next moments the strange notes of a bird were heard trilling and warbling in the most natural manner.

Instantly the Persian women became hushed, and all listened in silence.

The notes of the bird ceased, when the women commenced to chatter like so many magpies.

Tom watched, and muttered: "So far, so good!"

"But there is no chance that you will bring the maiden forth, even if she be there."

"You see I have charmed the Persian women; those are the notes of a bird they never heard before. I have not completed my experiment yet."

After a few moments the notes of the strange bird were heard again.

This time the singer, instead of twittering, whistled a plaintive bird-song.

Again the Persian women were silent, and once more the strange notes ceased.

"Your experiment is amusing and romantic," said the detective, "but I think you are exercising your vocal accomplishments and imitations at a great risk."

"We will see," said Tom, in a complacent manner, adding, "I have not completed my experiment yet."

"Why do you not complete it then?" whispered Walton Sprague, in an impatient tone.

The detective thought that the Turco-European was practicing with the chances against him.

Tom allowed the women to chatter for a while, all the time watching with his keen black eyes.

Again the strange bird commenced to warble, and after several bird-like variations, the air "Annie Laurie" was distinctly whistled.

The last strain had just died away, when from the harem came a veiled figure.

"Ah, ha!" whispered Tom, "now what do you think of my experiment?"

The detective was paralyzed with astonishment.

The full cunningness of the exercise of Tom's wonderful talent burst upon his mind, and at the same moment, with a choking emotion, he recognized that it had proven successful. One glance at the figure which had come from the house revealed the fact that she was not a Persian woman.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A MOMENT of silence followed.

In the meantime, the girl who had come from the house stood in a listening attitude.

The detective managed to whisper:

"Give her another note."

"Not just yet," answered Tom; "I may spoil all; you leave this little matter to me and I will pledge myself that we have not come here for nothing."

The detective's emotions were so intense that it had become an agony.

He felt assured that one of the girls, either Amalie or Lucy, stood before him.

He felt like springing forth and clasping her in his arms, but his long training as a detective had taught him to control himself.

A moment passed, and the strange notes of the bird were heard once more.

This time the air was the old one of the gypsy song, "Be Watchful and Beware."

The true air was interlarded between several very bird-like strains, and none but one well acquainted with the tone, would have detected it.

The girl advanced a few steps toward the point from whence the bird-song seemingly came.

A moment, and she stood squarely under the broad beams of the moon.

As though she had received instructions, she removed her veil, and the full, delicate face of an European girl was revealed.

Her features were plainly discernible, and, with a freezing sensation, Walton Sprague recognized that it was neither Lucy nor Amalie.

Only an instant, however, did he permit this feeling of disappointment to prevail.

It was a countrywoman, or, at least, one of his race, who was a captive, and he felt as much bound to rescue her as though she had been Amalie, or Lucy, or even his own sister.

Again Jalakei repeated the strain, "Be Watchful and Beware!"

The girl moved away, and mingled, for a moment, with her veiled companions.

Walton Sprague noticed that the latter immediately drew away from the white girl, proving that a jealous feeling existed toward her.

The girl again moved near the spot where the bird-song had come from, when she, herself, commenced to sing:

"Ah! who art thou, my cavalier?"

Again the bird-song was heard trilling the air, the words to which are: "Oh! come! oh! come with me!"

The other women of the harem had, seeming-

ly, become accustomed to the notes of the strange bird, and had resumed their various amusements.

It seemed to be a haughty pride which led them to purposely avoid the actions of the European girl, who had been thrust in among them.

The girl kept moving toward the shrubs, where the songster appeared to have alighted.

She was near enough to speak, and, having lowered her veil, she asked, in a low tone:

"Who is there?"

"Friends!" answered the detective.

"Have you come to rescue me from this horrid place?"

"We have."

"What shall I do?"

"Can you escape to the wall, surrounding the garden, without attracting observation?"

"I will try."

"At once?"

"Yes; there could be no better time."

The two men intended to wait and lead her, but she said:

"Proceed, and I will follow—there will be less risk."

"Reach your hand," said Jalakei, "and I will give you the end of a line of silk thread. Then you will know the way."

The girl came close to the shrubbery, and Jalakei, who had thoughtfully prepared for just such an emergency, handed her the end of the silken line.

The two men then slowly moved over the ground by the same path that they had approached.

They had proceeded some distance, and Tom noticed that the silk had not been drawn taut.

He stopped a moment and drew on the line.

At once it was drawn to a tight tension.

The two proceeded, and had almost reached the wall, when suddenly Tom became aware that the thread had been snapped in twain, and the next moment a low, smothered scream reached their ears.

With the quickness of a flash both men rushed back.

A few steps, and upon turning into a broad path they saw the girl struggling in the arms of a gigantic black man.

Both men rushed forward. The black did not appear to hear them.

They saw, however, that in one hand he carried a gleaming cimeter, while with the other he held the captive and was seeking to drag her along.

"Do not use your pistols," said Jalakei, "or we will have fifty armed retainers after us, and all will be lost."

"We must save the girl at all hazards."

"I know; but we must not give an alarm."

"The black fellow will."

"No, he will not; he is a mute."

The above conversation had passed between the two men in a few brief seconds.

The next moment Jalakei had seized the negro.

The latter shook him off as though he had been a fly, and, dropping the girl, the black raised his cimeter.

An instant later and it would have been all over with poor Tom.

The detective, however, had seen the movement.

It was a life for a life, and the Turco-European's life at that moment was the most valuable.

Besides, the life and liberty of the girl were at stake.

With the quickness of a cat and the strength of a giant Walton Sprague leaped forward.

He had drawn his bowie-knife, and in a flash it was buried in the gigantic black's side.

The knife had been truly aimed.

The mute fell to the ground, and in a moment he was dead. The very earth trembled under him.

"Take the girl and hasten to the wall," said Jalakei, in a low tone.

The detective seized the girl's hand, saying:

"Come! we will save you or die!"

They passed to the wall and waited.

In a few seconds Tom joined them.

A moment more they were across the wall, and stealing rapidly away.

When they were some distance toward their camp, the detective said:

"We will be suspected and pursued."

"It won't make any difference. I have fixed matters," was the answer.

"What have you done?"

"I have thrown suspicion in another direction."

Tom spoke truly. With remarkable coolness and forethought at the time he had remained behind, he had left several Bedouin articles scattered around the corpse of the dead negro, making it thus appear that the rescue, or robbery, as he would have it seem, had been perpetrated by those evil sons of the desert.

They had been moving rapidly, the rescued proving herself an excellent walker.

When near the place of their camp, Tom said, addressing the late captive:

"We must hide you until after our camp has been visited by the retainers of your late master."

"Do anything with me, even kill me, rather than I should again fall into the hands of that wretch."

During the tramp back to camp, Walton Sprague had learned from the girl her history, and the incidents which led to her being a captive in the Persian merchant's harem.

She had been a passenger on board a Mediterranean steamer.

The vessel had sprung a leak, and the passengers had been taken off by different vessels.

In the confusion of the moment, herself and husband of two weeks had been separated.

He had been taken off in one vessel, and she upon another, which landed her at a village on the coast.

Under the escort of a number of natives, she had started for a larger town, a shipping port, when they were attacked by a band of roving Arabs.

She had supposed that her escort had been killed, but subsequent thought had led her to believe that she had been betrayed.

Continuing her story, the girl, who was of Irish birth, added, that she had been carried by her captors across the Arabian desert, and had finally been sold to the merchant from whom she had just been rescued.

The girl finally added in a tone of meaning significance:

"I thank Heaven that you have rescued me as you did! I have defended myself till now; but," she added, as a blush mantled her fair cheeks, "had I remained in that building a few days longer, I would not have desired to have been rescued. I would have been lost to my husband forever!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

TOM JALAKEI knew that, despite his little *ruse*, the merchant would overhaul their camp under any circumstances, and consequently it was absolutely necessary that the girl they had rescued should be hidden until after the search for her had been made.

As we have recorded, the party were traveling along that part of Persia where it is very mountainous.

Tom told Walton Sprague to go forward to their camp, while he found a safe hiding-place for the recovered bride.

The detective, when he reached the camp, related what had occurred to Frank Midgely.

"We are getting to be regular Don Quixotes," laughingly answered Frank, adding, "If we keep on, we will rescue all the captives in Persia."

"Remember, when men go blue-fishing, that they are liable to catch Spanish mackerel as well," exclaimed Walton Sprague; adding, "It is our mission to rescue two dear maidens, and that quite naturally throws us into the way of finding these others."

It was near daylight when Tom Jalakei returned.

The Turco-European appeared to be a perfect good angel, always in the right place just at the right moment; and, besides, seemingly always ready to do just the right act at any emergency.

"We must strike our tents and be moving," said he, after having taken some refreshment.

"Why not wait here and receive our visit from the Persian?"

"No; it won't do. You must proceed leisurely and act as naturally as though we never knew there was such a thing as a harem in existence."

They mounted their horses and started on their journey, proceeding, as Tom had requested, in a very leisurely manner.

As they rode along, Frank Midgely made the remark that their real perils would just commence on their return trip.

"Oh, we will never return by the way we have come."

"Why not?"

"We will most probably have the ladies with us, and it would not be safe. We will have to make for the Caspian Sea, and get transportation over into Trans-Caucasia, and by a round-about way make our course to Europe."

"But the yacht?"

"Oh, we can send a messenger to the crew, and they will meet us at any port in Europe that we may name."

While this conversation was going on, Walton Sprague chanced to look behind him, and remarked:

"There comes a body of horsemen galloping after us like mad!"

"I have had my weather-eye on them fellows for some time!" remarked Tom Jalakei.

"Let's wait for them to overtake us," said Frank.

"Not a bit of it! That would look as though we were expecting them," said the detective, in answer to Frank.

The detective was right, and they kept upon their way until the horsemen came up to them, surrounding the little party, and flourishing their cimiers and spears in a very furious manner, as the command to halt was issued.

The Americans did not appear discomposed in the least. They reined in their horses, and quietly waited to see what all this fierce gesticulation meant.

A man dressed in elegant attire, after the manner of the richest of the Persians, and seated upon a horse splendidly caparisoned, rode forward amidst the band of horsemen.

Tom Jalakei stepped forward to act as spokesman for the Americans.

A short and excited colloquy followed.

The Persian spoke in a rapid and excited manner, all the time gesticulating violently, while Tom Jalakei was cool and even in his tones and manner.

As the Americans were not in camp, but had their tents folded on their pack beasts, there was no place to search—the missing girl was either with them or she was not.

Tom seemingly managed after awhile to convince the Persian, and as suddenly as he had appeared, he galloped away again, followed by his spearmen.

"We are well out of that affair," remarked Frank.

"Not yet," answered Tom Jalakei, with a significant shrug of his shoulders. "That Persian is a shrewder chap than I took him to be, and we will be visited by him again; but he will seek to take us unawares."

The party did not make much progress that day.

They pretended to be examining the geological formations and flora of the country.

As this was not an unusual mode with European travelers, it did not necessarily occasion any special suspicion.

That same night, about midnight, all hands in their camp were suddenly aroused by the firing of guns, and a hullabaloo and confusion of the most exciting kind.

Tom Jalakei rushed up to Frank and Walton Sprague, just as the two latter emerged from their tent, exclaiming:

"It's all right. The Persian has returned, and thinks he has taken us by surprise; but he's nicely fooled, and when he goes away this time, it will be the last of him."

A thorough search of the camp was made.

The followers of the merchant penetrated the Americans' tent, and even opened packages and bundles, as though a full-grown woman might have been concealed in them.

After remaining about an hour, the spearmen a second time took their departure.

Tom Jalakei waited until they had been gone an hour, when, mounting a horse, and taking another with him, he rode away alone.

In about three hours, and just before the break of day, he returned.

He was not alone. The extra horse which he had taken with him had a rider, and the latter was a veiled female.

The party broke camp at once, and proceeded upon their way.

During the day's journey, they traveled in the most rapid manner, making it actually a forced march.

At night they only camped until midnight, when the march was resumed, and on the evening of the second day, Tom announced that they were within the district under the dominion of Hamud.

The Turco-European assumed a disguise, which he had brought with him for the purpose, and went forth to reconnoiter.

Shortly after daylight he returned, and threw Frank Midgely and the detective into a fever of excitement by announcing that he had visited the residence of Hamud, and had managed to interview one of the Ujak's dependents, a person who appeared to be thoroughly posted concerning his master's affairs.

The information Tom obtained was that Hamud had returned a few days previously, after an absence of over a year; that he had brought two females with him, but one of them had died during the last day's march, and that the Ujak had arrived with a live girl and a dead one.

The question now was, which of the two girls had fallen a victim to her misfortunes?

The two men knew that for one of them there was deep anguish in store.

Frank Midgely already mourned, as he stated that he knew the delicately reared Lucy was the one who had succumbed.

CHAPTER XXX.

WALTON SPRAGUE was compelled to confess that the probabilities were that Lucy was the victim, although he did not admit as much to Frank.

The detective was sad. He had indulged high hopes of final success, but it appeared as though in one sense their journey was about to prove a failure.

In talking to Frank, and in order to cheer him up, the detective said:

"I tell you what, Frank; it may prove that we have come on a wild-goose chase. Neither of the captive girls may have been the ones we are seeking."

"It is of no use," said Frank, "to try and console me under any such plea as that. I have made up my mind that Lucy is dead, and now nothing remains for me but to avenge her, and then nurse my own sorrow."

That same night it was determined to attempt the rescue of the living captive.

Tom Jalakei suggested that he and the detective should accomplish the rescue, as they had been so successful upon the previous occasion.

To this Frank would not listen. He asserted that he would go if he were compelled to go alone.

Both Tom and the detective felt that Frank's only object in going was to accomplish his revenge and die.

A long consultation was held, but Frank proved immovable.

His friend, however, succeeded in extorting a promise from him that he would do nothing rash, and would in no way impede the successful rescue of the living girl.

"When you have accomplished that part of the business," said he, "I shall feel myself at liberty to act as I think fit, so long as I do not in any way imperil my friends."

The residence of the Ujak Hamud was different from any residence in all Persia.

Its owner had been educated in Europe, and while there had fallen in love with some of the ruins of old castles on the banks of the Rhine.

Upon his return he had selected a site on his domain suitable for the erection of a residence, partially upon the plan of one of the German castles.

His house, although only a one-story building, and in this respect like most all other buildings in Persia, was built right in the face of the rock with overhanging cliffs, which formed a protecting defense of solid rock, hundreds of feet in thickness.

The garden was built on a plateau or natural shelf which shot out from the mountain-side; while the harem or female apartment was hewn partly out of the solid rock.

The whole place was almost totally inaccessible, except by the narrow stone passage-way which led up to the main entrance.

As Walton Sprague subsequently remarked, "With a few pieces of artillery and a company of soldiers, the place could have been successfully defended against a small army."

When our three friends, well armed, arrived under the walls of the Persian fortress, they came to a halt to consider what course they should pursue.

Tom Jalakei had learned that Hamud kept about him a force numbering over a hundred spearmen.

What the Americans intended to accomplish they well knew must be accomplished by stratagem.

The front or outer wall surrounding the main building was at least twenty-five feet in height. It presented a perpendicular surface, as smooth as polished marble, thus banishing at once all idea of scaling.

A few moments only were required to convince the three men that the chances were dead against them.

A complete circuit and survey was made, resulting in a conviction even more gloomy.

"I will tell you what we must do," said Tom Jalakei, after a few moments of silent thought; "we must manage to attract the captive girl's attention; could we succeed in that, the rescue can be easily accomplished."

"I know of no expedient to attract her attention," answered Sprague.

"Well, I do!" exclaimed Jalakei, and he commenced drawing a number of ingenious contrivances from his pocket.

"What do you propose to do?" asked both his companions.

"I am going to fly a signal."

The half-breed's signal was a very practical, and, under the circumstances, ingenious affair, consisting of an illuminated kite, with several lines in French, printed in colors, which permitted them to be read at a considerable distance.

The wind being favorable, Jalakei let his kite go, and in a few minutes it glided upward, and floated in close proximity to the windows of the harem.

A few moments passed.

The three men watched, with anxious minds, the result of the experiment.

At least five minutes passed, when a voice was heard, singing a popular air from an opera which had first been sung in New York City, but a few months previously.

"That settles it!" exclaimed the detective, in a delighted tone, as the air fell upon his ear.

Walton Sprague had often heard Amalie sing the same song, she having a magnificent voice.

Joy and sorrow were commingled at that critical moment.

The fact was solved that they had followed upon the right trail.

The two captive girls had been Lucy and Amalie, and the latter was still living, and would soon be under their protection.

Alas, however, the information Jalakei had received, joined with the result of his ingenious experiment, proved, also, that poor Lucy Palmedo had fallen a victim to her misfortunes.

But one would be rescued, the other would remain an occupant of an unknown grave in a Persian desert.

Walton had his eyes fixed upon poor Frank Midgely as the facts above presented were fully settled.

He expected to see the youth give signs of his great sorrow.

On the contrary, the young man advanced toward the detective, and, grasping his hand, said:

"Thank Heaven! old boy, there is joy at heart for you!"

"And you, Frank, how my heart bleeds for you!"

"Oh! never mind me; Lucy at least is happy and relieved of her suffering."

"I wish we could have carried her back to her father," said Sprague.

"If we stand here talking, we will not carry Amalie back," suggested Frank.

Tom Jalakei, however, had not been idle.

He had evidently been prepared for the success of his experiment, as he rapidly drew in his kite, and as speedily sent it up again containing the words:

"Come to the west wall; friends await you; fail not!"

A few moments later, and the same voice was heard once more from the harem, and the kite was hauled down.

"Now, then, our road is clear," said Jalakei, adding: "you remain here and lay low, while I run in and get a little contrivance which I have prepared to carry our work to a successful end."

Tom Jalakei was gone about ten minutes, when he returned, bearing with him a number of ropes with large iron hooks attached.

Being a sailor, he managed with perfect ease to throw his ropes over the wall.

The hooks caught, and he was ready to ascend.

The three men had learned that Amalie was a

close prisoner, and could not come to the west wall.

As the mountain would not come to Mohammed, why, Mohammed would go to the mountain.

In other words, now that they were sure that the object of their search was in the building, they had found a mode of reaching her.

Tom Jalakei was proving himself to be a perfect genius in the way of stratagem.

The moment the hooks caught and the way to ascend the wall was open, he told his companions to examine their guns, and see that all was ready for instant use.

Finding their weapons all right, the half-breed pointed to three stout bags and remarked:

"We must carry those with us, we may have a scrimmage, and they contain ammunition which will make us equal to forty men."

CHAPTER XXXI.

Tom gave directions that after he had ascended the wall, that the three bags should be passed up to him, then all of the weapons.

"It means fight, gentlemen, and there will be a few dead yellow faces around here in the morning, I reckon."

Frank Midgely was cold, stern, and methodical.

The affair apparently had assumed just the phase which suited him.

The young man felt that Lucy had been murdered, and in his own mind he had resolved that he would never leave the land where her body was moldering until her murderers had paid the penalty of their crime.

Jalakei having completed all of his preparations, ascended the rope with the ease and agility of a monkey.

The three mysterious bags and the weapons were passed up, and then Walton Sprague and Frank Midgely also ascended to the top of the wall.

All was still.

Not a soul apparently was stirring in either house or grounds.

Addressing Frank, Tom Jalakei told him that he must be the one to attend to the girl, while Sprague and himself acted as a guard for defense.

The half-breed led the way toward the entrance to the harem.

The garden through which they passed, although planted in artificial soil, was as rich and luxuriant as though laid in a Kansas prairie.

When near the entrance, the two Americans were told to lay low, while the half-breed crept forward on his hands and knees to reconnoiter.

A few moments passed, when Sprague and Frank heard a low signal, and they advanced.

There were no bolts and bars to encounter.

The safety of the place was seemingly insured by the almost inaccessible walls by which it was surrounded.

When our friends had approached to where Tom lay crouched, the latter resorted to his old trick, and the same notes which had won the young girl from the other harem a few nights previously were again heard.

The ingenious device met the same success.

The voice of Amalie, who now appeared fully aware that friends were near to rescue her, was heard.

In her song, she conveyed the information that there were two armed men at her door, and also conveyed the information as to how they could enter the house, and reach the door of the room where she was confined.

The three men entered the house, which was a two-story building, surrounded by courts and verandas.

The building was not what would be termed a solid one, but was built in terrace form round an inner court-yard, where flowed a fountain supplied from a mountain stream.

The three rescuers were compelled to pass through into this inclosed garden, and go along to the east, where they would find a passage, which led directly to the prison room of the girl they had come to rescue.

The garden was reached, and the three men were passing stealthily along, when they were brought to a sudden halt by hearing the sound of a footstep.

"Hist!" warned Jalakei; and all three crouched down behind the wall surrounding a fountain.

At the same moment, the movement of the step, which had halted, ceased also.

Jalakei stole on in advance.

He had proceeded but a few yards, when he saw two men, armed with spears, who were conversing with a huge black fellow.

The men were speaking in Persian, a language with which the half-breed was sufficiently acquainted to understand their words.

The black was telling the soldiers about the flying of the kite and other strange occurrences, in connection with the white girl who was a captive in the harem.

Jalakei took in the peril at once.

Should suspicion be aroused, word would be carried to Hamud, and they would have two score spearmen at their heels in a trice.

There was not a moment to lose.

It was a matter of life and death.

Wrong and murder lay at the door of the men before him.

An innocent girl was in even worse peril than the mere loss of her life!

From under his belt, the half-breed drew a long, glittering knife.

A more holy war on a small scale had never been waged.

Down upon the ground he dropped, and with the noiseless movement of a cobra, he crawled forward, until he was within a few feet of the negro and the Persians.

Then up he rose to his feet, leaped forward, a knife flashed and glittered in the starlight. A short struggle followed, but no noise save that of falling bodies was heard, and in less than five minutes from the moment when he had left his companions, three men lay bleeding at his feet.

Tom Jalakei had done a fearful work in the most expeditious manner.

The negro and his two companions were all stricken down under blows from his blade before they could realize that a fourth party was among them.

As noiselessly as he had advanced, Tom Jalakei returned to where his companions were standing, and said, in a low, quick voice:

"Come!"

Frank and the detective were not aware of what the half-breed had accomplished during the few brief moments he had been absent, until they had come to the spot where the three dead men lay.

"A fight," said Frank, in a low voice.

"Yes; I had to do it, or we would all have been murdered."

The three men now advanced, found the passage, and entered.

Again Tom Jalakei ordered them to halt, while he crawled forward to look out for the two spearmen who were supposed to be guarding the captive's door.

But one man was there.

"I will spare his life!" muttered the half-breed, as he crawled forward.

Again, when at the proper distance, like a tiger preparing for a spring, Tom leaped forward and bore the spearman to the ground, and, with a knife at the man's throat, ordered him to be silent.

The command was hardly needed.

The spearman was a youthful Persian, who had never seen service, and he was paralyzed and speechless with fear.

In a moment he was gagged and bound.

Tom advanced straight to the door where the captive was supposed to be, pushed open the door, and entered.

A dim light glowed in the room, and on the center of the floor stood the beautiful girl whom he and his employers had traveled so many miles and encountered so many perils to rescue.

"Follow me, and be silent!" said the half-breed.

The girl did not need a second bidding, nor did she speak.

In fact, she was speechless with joyful excitement.

The perils and agonies through which she had passed were so terrible that it was not strange that at such a moment she followed and was silent.

In the broad hall below they found Frank and Sprague.

In the darkness the Americans could not discern who was approaching, and both clapped their hands to their weapons.

"It's all right!" said Tom. "I have the captive!"

Walton Sprague leaped forward, and clasping the girl in his strong arms, exclaimed:

"Oh! Amalie, darling, is it you?"

The girl could not speak, but she did a very womanly thing under the circumstances.

She fainted!

This accident was an awkward interruption, but, as usual, Tom Jalakei was equal to the occasion.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE half-breed rushed to the fountain and returned with water.

A few moments were spent in bringing the rescued girl around to consciousness.

Those few moments, however, in the end proved costly ones.

"We have not a moment to ask or answer questions," said Tom, interrupting the two impetuous Americans who were making inquiries concerning the dead Lucy.

Frank was deputed to take charge of the girl, while the detective and half-breed led the advance toward the wall.

They had just passed out upon the veranda, when a sight met their gaze which opened up to them the fearful peril which menaced them.

Advancing through the garden, carrying torches with them, were at least fifty spearmen.

"Three minutes' loss of time has ruined us!" muttered Jalakei.

"We have not been seen yet!" answered the detective.

"No, but our presence is known. See! Al-dema leads those men! Hamud is not far off!"

"We must cut our way through them even if they number a hundred!"

"Ay, we must, but we must do nothing rash; we must find a way to get out on the other side, and we may fool them yet!"

Frank was informed of the situation, and his reply was:

"Now I shall have my revenge!"

"Let me have one of the bags," said Tom Jalakei, "and you two with the girl go up the stairs; you may escape by one of the windows; make your way to the wall and be off. If I do not follow, never mind!"

"I will not leave you, Tom; if you fall, I'll fall beside you."

"Then send Midgely with the girl; we have not a second to spare!"

"You come with us."

"I will, but not till the last moment. I may make a diversion in favor of Frank and the girl."

At this moment a shout arose.

The spearmen had spied their prey, and rushed forward.

"Now is the time," said Tom, and his hand was thrust into the bag, from which he drew an object which he sent into the midst of the advancing spearmen.

An instant later a report was heard, followed by yells and groans and the utmost confusion.

The cunning half-breed had cast a hand grenade amidst the advancing Persians.

The effect was perfectly fearful.

The missiles were made in the most effective manner, and at least a dozen spearmen fell victims to the explosion.

Taking advantage of the confusion, Tom Jalakei retreated, and led the way for his friends.

The man appeared to possess a sagacity that was simply astonishing.

One would have thought that he had been familiar with the building all his life.

He found a window leading out upon the veranda roof, and was just on the point of bidding his friends follow him through, when a flash illuminated the darkness. A report followed, and a bullet crashed close to the half-breed's head.

"Hang the luck, we are in for it now!" was his exclamation, as he sprang back from the window.

In the meantime, the Persians, who had been thrown into confusion by the exploding grenade, had recovered from their fright, and were advancing up the stairway.

Walton Sprague and Frank would have rushed to meet them, but Tom told them to watch the window, and he would fix the fellows advancing up the stairs.

Walton Sprague advanced to the window when, a second time, a single shot came.

The bullet passed within an inch of the detective's head.

Frank Midgely had his carbine with him, and dropping upon his knees, he glanced around the frame-work of the window.

He was watching for the rifleman who had nearly cost them two lives.

"Walton, show yourself a moment!" he said.

The detective understood the dodge, and exposed himself.

An instant later, a flash and report followed. The last time, however, it did not come from the garden.

Frank's *ruse* had worked well.

The secret shooter in the garden, the moment Walton Sprague showed himself at the window, incautiously exposed himself, and the next moment he lay bleeding amidst the shrubbery, with a bullet-hole through his bosom.

In the meantime Tom Jalakei was having a small-sized skirmish on his own account.

He had waited until the spearmen were well wedged in the hallway, when bang! went a second hand grenade.

A second and third quickly followed, when a scene of confusion ensued which even a regular battle-field could not have furnished.

The men shouted and yelled, while mingled with harsh voices now came the shrill piercing screams of terrified women.

The spearmen had been repulsed.

No persuasion could induce them to enter that fatal door-way again.

Suddenly, however, Tom saw a sight that filled him with horror.

An enemy had appeared which he could not combat.

A red glare illuminated the hallway.

One glance sufficed to establish the fact that the explosives had set the light materials of which the summer harem was built on fire.

"By ginger!" exclaimed Tom, who sometimes indulged in Yankee slang phrases, "we'll be roasted like mice in a cheese-box."

Tom rejoined his friends.

Already they had discovered that the building was on fire.

"We must go through the windows," said Tom; adding, "Follow me, I will lead the way."

The half-breed was not aware that the rifleman had been shot, and volunteered to lead the way so as to draw the fire on himself and save his companions.

The party were soon on the slanting roof of the veranda.

"Give me the girl and I will leap to the ground with her," said Tom.

He was a moment too late, however, with his generous offer.

Walton Sprague had caught the girl in his arms, and had already made the leap.

A fearful scene was presented on every side.

The whole building was now illuminated by the flames, as was also the garden surrounding it.

Every object was plainly visible.

The Americans soon found themselves in the midst of a bevy of screaming women, who were running hither and thither in every direction, their dark faces convulsed with terror.

The Americans struggled toward the wall.

By some means Frank became separated from his companions.

He was standing near a fountain, watching the exciting scene, when he imagined he heard a light footstep.

He turned, and saw a woman rushing toward him.

She uttered an exclamation in a tongue unknown to our hero, and threw herself into his arms.

Frank would have made an effort to carry her to a place of safety, but he did not know which way to turn.

He disengaged himself from her frantic embrace, when, as a portion of the roof fell in, a red glare shot up to the sky, and a human figure stood plainly revealed a short distance away.

Frank uttered a wild cry.

All other emotions at that terrible moment were swallowed up in the sentiment of revenge.

The figure he had seen was that of Hamud, the murderer of Lucy.

Frank drew his knife—he would not trust to pistol bullet now.

"The man must die; his death must be assured."

Our hero uttered one cry, and rushed toward the man who had done him so great a wrong.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

It was a fitting moment for a fearful revenge.

Already the groans of the dying, and the affrighted screams of the living were mingled with the crackling and fierce roar of the flames, while over all spread the red glare of the destroying element.

Under this lurid light, Frank Midgely and Hamud the Shadow stood face to face.

Frank was the first to speak. In low fierce tones he said:

"Murderer! at last we meet!"

The answer was a laugh—a wild, unnatural, maniacal laugh.

"I'll show thee no mercy now!" exclaimed Frank.

A low, sharp report was the answer, and Frank felt a sharp, burning sensation in his side.

Like a flash the truth shot through his mind.

The assassin had sent a bullet into his body.

Strength, will and sense in a moment might fail.

Not an instant was to be lost.

The arm of the assassin was raised for a second shot, but ere the finger pressed the trigger, a knife thrust had cut the sinews of the wrist.

Hamud leaped back as the bleeding limb fell at his side, and raised the uninjured hand to his lips.

The signal which he intended to give, however, was never uttered.

His heart had been pierced, and the body of the murderer reeled and fell, a lifeless, breathless mass at the avenger's feet.

At the same moment, Frank staggered, and would have fallen helpless at the side of his victim, but a pair of strong arms were extended to uphold him, and a strong, manly voice exclaimed:

"Why, Frank, we had lost you; come this way!"

"I've killed him at last, Walton! There he lies! Lucy is avenged!"

"Come, come, my dear boy; it's getting hot here; a moment, and we will be unable to escape; the flames will overwhelm us."

"Leave me and escape. Let the flames consume me, and my ashes will need no sepulcher. I have avenged Lucy; he can do no more harm. But, Walton, my friend, he has wounded me to death. I will die here!"

Walton Sprague knew that not a moment was to be wasted, and he caught Frank in his arms.

The young man struggled and exclaimed:

"I am dying, Walton; there is no use in saving me from the fire; leave me here, and take care of yourself. You know where my papers are in New York. I have remembered you in my will. Now go, dear boy, go, go! Kiss me, my friend, and then go, go!"

Walton Sprague did so.

The flames were crackling and hissing close to him, and the heat and stifling smoke would have soon caused him to sink helpless to the earth.

He did not go alone, however.

In his strong arms he bore his dying friend.

At that terrible moment, his experience and practice as a detective served him well.

His habits of observation enabled him to mark the return path well, and in a few seconds he was beyond the flame and smoke, and was making his way to the point in the wall where the rope had been caught.

Tom Jalakei stood waiting, and assisted in lowering Frank to the plain below, when the detective explained what had occurred.

Again Tom proved himself equal to the occasion.

The mountains were but a few miles distant.

The half-breed said he had, many years before, made the acquaintance of an Armenian, who resided in one of the mountain hamlets.

The sailor had saved the Armenian's life, and knew that they would find refuge and shelter if they could reach his house.

That very night they built a litter, a few Bedouins were employed, and the journey was commenced up the mountain.

Upon the evening of the following day they reached the hamlet, found the man they were in search of, and were hospitably received.

A Persian doctor undertook the care of Frank, and after a few days held out hopes of his final recovery.

The bracing air of the mountain was in the wounded man's favor, and all the party found a welcome rest from the perils and journeyings through which they had passed.

Tom Jalakei had made a visit to the scene of the tragedy.

The news he brought was quite encouraging.

Hamud and the only friend whom he had brought with him from the coast were both dead.

They had perished amidst the confusion of fight and fire, without having made any explanation as to the real authors of the tragedy.

A relative of the young Persian had already taken possession of the estate, and as the attack

was supposed to have been made by a band of desert robbers, there would be no pursuit of the Americans, and they could rest in perfect security to both mind and body.

For a few days Walton Sprague was very unhappy, but when Frank was pronounced out of danger, he became contented and happy.

And he had every reason to be happy, as after all the perils he had undergone in her behalf, the lovely Amalie had consented to become his wife.

She also told him the story of her adventures. She had been kidnapped and brought on board of the trading schooner, and had been kept a close prisoner until they reached Jaffa on the Mediterranean.

It was not until they were journeying across the desert that she became aware that another captive was with them.

She had just caught a glimpse of her companion in misery, and from her description Walton Sprague had no doubt of the fact that poor Lucy Palmado had fallen a victim to the Shadow Hamud's schemes and wicked conspiracy.

A few days after the final announcement of Frank Midgely's convalescence, Tom Jalakei started for the coast.

He found the yacht at the appointed port, and all hands safe and sound aboard.

His traveling companion was the young bride who had been rescued in such a wonderful manner from the house of the Persian merchant.

Two weeks later Walton Sprague, Frank Midgely, and Amalie, the lovely French girl, joined the party.

Frank was not wholly recovered, but was able to make the passage across the plains by easy stages.

The young man was listless and silent.

His heart was buried in the grave of his lost Lucy.

A week later and the yacht, with the whole party on board, sailed for England.

They had a prosperous voyage, and the lost bride was once more restored to her husband by Walton Sprague.

As the Americans were not in need of any other reward, they received a shower of thanks and blessings from those whom they had been the instruments in once again uniting after such an extraordinary and romantic separation.

Before a week had passed quite an interesting event occurred in an obscure church in the city of Liverpool.

Walton Sprague was married to the lovely Amalie.

The detective would have delayed the ceremony, not wishing to consummate his own happiness when his dear friend was so unhappy, but Frank insisted that the ceremony should take place.

Tom Jalakei also became a happy husband, and his bride was the veiled woman of the ruin, the lovely widow of the Sheik Hajah.

Walton Sprague was furnished with abundant means, and the yacht sailed for New York with all the party on board save its owner.

Frank announced that he would remain a few months in Europe, when he would join his friends in America.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A MONTH subsequent to the events related, a young man, pale and handsome, walked daily through the paths of the Bois de Boulogne, the Central Park of the City of Paris.

Many a pair of lovely eyes were fixed upon the pale and handsome stranger who appeared so sad and melancholy.

The young stranger was in the park every clear day, and if the truth were told, quite a number of ladies retired daily to their homes with the figure of the youth a prominent picture in their imaginations.

Our readers have already guessed that the strange pedestrian was our hero, Frank Midgely.

The young man indeed did look sad, for a great sorrow preyed at his heart.

He was not unconscious of the passing beauties whom daily he met, but their presence only reminded him of the joy that might have been his, but for the cursed machinations of that evil fellow, the Shadow Hamud.

Every merry laugh was a knell to his sad heart, and yet day after day he wandered there for no other purpose than to behold those happy faces and hear that merry laughter.

Strange as it may seem, he purposely allowed his heart to be pierced.

One evening two American girls were sitting in their parlor in a Paris hotel.

One of them told to the other how, upon several occasions, she had seen a handsome, sad-faced youth walking in the woods of the Bois.

"Everybody is talking about it," said the relater, adding, "you must ride with me tomorrow, darling, and see this sad-faced Adonis, who, unless he explains the mystery surrounding him, will have all the beautiful women in Paris going mad with curiosity!"

Upon the afternoon following the little incident and dialogue above related, Frank, as usual, was taking his walk in the Bois.

Upon this particular afternoon he was more melancholy than usual.

His imagination was playing sad pranks with him.

Several times he had imagined that the living Lucy had appeared before him.

In the madness of the moment, urged by the excitement caused by these mental hallucinations, he had wandered far from the frequented paths, and had seated himself in a rustic seat by the shore of a miniature lake.

His thoughts became painfully intense.

"Oh! heavens!" he at length murmured, "I shall go mad! I shall go mad! Can it be that the spirit of my lost Lucy is hovering over me at this moment, that her image is so fearfully and really present with me?"

The youth covered his eyes with his hands, and his bosom heaved with a great sob of sorrow.

He heard a rustle near him, but would not uncover his eyes and look up.

An instant later he heard a light step; still he remained with his face buried in his hands.

Then a voice fell upon his ear, and, in familiar tones, he heard his own name called.

He spoke, and his words were:

"Oh, Heaven! let not this sweet vision pass from me! If I be dreaming, let me dream, and awake me not!"

The youth evidently appeared to imagine that it was but the voice of his imagination he heard.

A moment passed.

Again he heard his name called, and still he remained with his face covered, lest he might break the spell.

A hand was laid upon the young man's shoulder, and another was pressed against his brow.

There was life and warmth in the pressure of the latter.

Frank unveiled his face. A figure stood before him. One wild cry burst from his lips, coupled with the name "Lucy!" and the next moment a sylph-like female form, of flesh and blood, was clasped in the young man's strong arms.

An instant later, and he unclasped her, held her at arm's-length, gazed wildly at a lovely face, and asked:

"Oh! Lucy, Lucy! is it you, or am I dreaming? Are you but a spirit, that has but come from the grave to mock me?"

"Why, Frank, I do not know what you mean!" was the response, in a musical voice.

Explanations followed.

Frank told the story of his wanderings, and of his almost positive testimony that she had died a captive victim to the Shadow Hamud.

A great mystery was at once explained, in a most natural and matter-of-fact manner.

"Why, Frank! I have not been out of New York until about two weeks ago, when I sailed with papa for Paris."

"But, darling, where were you all the time that you were missing?"

"I have not been missing, Frank; you have been the missing one."

"Has your father known all the time where you have been?"

"Why, yes; I was gone away on a visit for two months. Papa came home one day and carried me away with him."

The truth flashed over Frank's mind.

He now understood the indifference Mr. Palmado seemed to experience concerning his daughter's fate.

"I shall never forgive your father, Lucy!"

"Forgive him? For what, Frank?"

A second explanation followed, and the truth became patent to Lucy; and she said:

"I see it all now. Frank. Papa took me away to break up our intimacy, but he shall make such atonement," added the lovely girl, with a blush, "that you shall be perfectly satisfied."

That same evening, the young Bois visitant who had been telling Lucy about the pale, mysterious stranger, had the satisfaction of sitting

in the same room in the Paris Hotel, and listening to the same young man's account of his wonderful adventures.

Mr. Palmado was of the party, and exculpated himself by saying that his action had been prompted because of the fact of his child's extreme youth and his disinclination to encourage an attachment from any quarter.

That same night a telegram had been flashed through the Atlantic to New York, and Walton Sprague received a laconic message, worded as follows:

"She is found!"

Upon the following morning our hero, by the same means, received a message, asking:

"Who?"

And again the answer went through the waters over the coiled wires with the word:

"Lucy."

A year later a merry party were gathered in one of the parlors of a prominent New York hotel.

Frank Midgely was there, and so was Mrs. Midgely, *née* Lucy Palmado. Walton Sprague was there, and Mrs. Sprague, *née* Amalie de Lucenay; and Tom Jalakei was there, and with him the veiled lady of the Syrian ruins, who was introduced as Mrs. Jalakei.

From Frank's great wealth all had been given a competence; and there is an old banker doing business in New York to-day who has a son-in-law whom few would believe had fought Bedouins and Persians on their native soil in search of a lost lady who is now his wife.

All of the yacht party were taken care of. We wish that we could add that all had mended their ways.

Romance might permit us to say so, but fact demands that we should only give the record concerning the principal characters in the series of adventures which we have patiently recorded.

THE END.

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